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# Ethnic Diplomacy: Race, the United States, and Mexico during World War II

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# Ethnic Diplomacy: Race, the United States, and Mexico during World War II

Jordan Lieser

Dissertation submitted  
to Eberly College of Arts and Sciences  
at West Virginia University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
History

James Siekmeier, Ph.D. Chair  
Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, Ph.D.  
Melissa Bingmann, Ph.D.  
Michele Stephens, Ph.D.  
Lorena Oropeza, Ph.D.

Department of History

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borderlands

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## ABSTRACT

### Ethnic Diplomacy: Race, the United States, and Mexico during World War II

Jordan Lieser

This dissertation begins by framing the overall relationship between the United States and Mexico during World War II and recognizes the significant economic role Mexico played in the U.S. wartime industrialization. With this framework in place, the emphasis of this research then turns to how Mexico pressured the United States government into addressing the racial prejudice which existed within the United States against what was perceived as a unified Latin American ethnic group. Thanks to the increased importance of Mexico, multiple parts of the United States government including the State Department, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, the state government of Texas, and the state government of California all participated in what the author terms as “ethnic diplomacy.” Ethnic diplomacy is a categorical delineation of diplomacy which emphasizes why different diplomacy occurred instead of the format of the diplomacy. In this case, the United States government actively sought to end racial prejudice in the American Southwest and beyond in the hope to remain “Good Neighbors” with Mexico at a time of global crisis when they could not afford otherwise.

*por mi familia*

## Acknowledgements

I believe that learning is a collaborative experience. While this is lesson more recognizable in the classroom rather than in scholarship, *Ethnic Diplomacy* was only made possible with the support, encouragement, and advice from the people listed throughout this section.

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I am also indebted to Stanford University and the Bill Lane Center for the American West. They provided me with a generous opportunity, access to a variety of valuable resources, and an incredible collaborative working atmosphere filled with brilliant minds. Specifically, Kathy Zonana for her leadership and Laura Ma for her friendship and support. Dr. David Kennedy proved an incredible mentor during my time at the Bill Lane Center and was central in my chapter, “Ethnic Diplomacy Comes to California.”

This project is also only as good as its primary resources. The retrieval of these resources was a lengthy process that relied on the support of a large number of individuals, financial support, archives, and archival staff. Most notably, the Dissertation Research Fellowship from West Virginia University provided me the opportunity to spend countless hours in the National Archives at College Park, Maryland and nearly a month between the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas and the Texas State Archives in Austin. I am also thankful for the Hoover Collection at Stanford University, the California State Archives in Sacramento, the University of California Los Angeles Chicano Studies Research Center, the *Biblioteca de Raúl Rangel Frías* at *La Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León* and the Regional Archive of *Nuevo León*, Mexico.

Last, but certainly not least, a big thank you to my friends, colleagues, and family who have supported me in one way or another in putting together this project. The love of history is alive and well in my family and their support has meant a lot.

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# Introduction: World War II, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Racial Prejudice

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*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, Pinocchio, Fantasia, Dumbo, and Bambi.*

As pretty much every U.S. Citizen—and I dare say a significant percentage of the world population—knows these are all Walt Disney animated feature films. To be precise, these are the first five feature films from the Walt Disney Company, which today are ingrained into American culture; however, what is more interesting about this list are numbers six and seven. While these next two were popular in their own time, only “disneyphiles” really remember *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* today.

Evidence of the first five film’s status as more successful than these two is found in their lack of subsequent attention. All of the first five had either a proposed sequel, a soon to be made sequel, or a finished sequel before these two films were even released on VHS or DVD home video in 2000. The reality is that *Saludos* and *Caballeros* represent a drastic divergence in Disney’s animated films by emphasizing Latin American nations.

Walt Disney and his wartime films were part of a broader movement that promoted better relations under the guise of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy. Disney was cooperating with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA, see chapter five), specifically their Motion Picture Division. The Division had a very specific set of objectives:

- 1) Increase the number of features, shots, and newsreels about the United States and the “other Americas” to distribute throughout the hemisphere.
- 2) Stimulate and produce pictures made in the other Americas to show in the United States.
- 3) Eliminate Axis-sponsored productions in the hemisphere.
- 4) Stop producing films that offend the other Americas.
- 5) Stop distributing films that “create a bad impression of the United States and our way of life.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United States. Office of Inter-American Affairs., *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*, Historical reports on war administration (Washington,: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1947).

By November of 1941, the Division had earned commitments from “all major companies...to produce a minimum of 24 hemispherical shorts for theatrical release in addition to specifically designed travelogues.” Within two years, the actual number of shorts produced in this category was 61, including titles such as “Viva Mexico,” “Highway to Friendship,” “Gaucho Sports,” “Madero of Mexico,” and “Cuba, Land of Romance and Adventure.” According to the Official History of the OCIAA written in 1947, “Mr. Disney was held to be one of the most effective in the field.” The Division even funded a trip through some American Republics for Disney and his staff—known as *El Grupo*—which directly resulted in *Saludos Amigos* and a number of shorts. Future contracts between Disney and the OCIAA followed, resulting in *The Three Caballeros* and a number of other animated works. Walt Disney had become a major player in improving hemispherical relations and the story of ethnic diplomacy goes a long way in explaining why Walt Disney ever looked south of the border.

“Ethnic diplomacy” is a straight forward concept. It is defined as all forms and styles of diplomacy—including cultural, public, or traditional—conducted with the intent of combating racial discrimination against a perceived ethnic group. The case described in this work, titled as *Ethnic Diplomacy*, originated in the State Department during World War II.<sup>2</sup> The State Department and eventually a much wider network of individuals, groups, and layers of government, strived to maintain harmonious, or at least non-confrontational, relations with its “neighbors” to the south in Latin America,

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<sup>2</sup> Note on usage: When *Ethnic Diplomacy* is italicized it is referring to the dissertation as a whole, when Ethnic diplomacy is left without italicization it is referring to the concept as defined here.

particularly Mexico, by preventing acts of racial discrimination against Latin Americans within their own borders.<sup>3</sup>

The standard narrative of the U.S. in World War II typically does not include ethnic diplomacy or typically even Latin America. Instead, the emphasis is always on the European theatre, the Pacific theatre, and the mass industrialization and cooperative efforts on the home front. In some of the more recent World War II scholarship, these discussions have been expanded somewhat to include topics such as the Women's Army Corps, dissent on the home front, and controversial troop behaviors such as sexually transmitted diseases and prostitution. Even with this historiographical growth, Latin America largely remains out of the discussion with the exception of the harboring of Nazis in South America and the infamous historical fallacy that Hitler absconded to Argentina rather than committing suicide. Interestingly, the statistics tell us to think otherwise. The first notable number is the troop deployments in the early part of the war. While the bulk of the soldiers ended up in the classic theatres mentioned above, 19 different deployments sent troops to Latin America: The Bahamas, Haiti, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Curacao, Antigua, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Aruba, British Guiana, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Guatemala, Galapagos, Venezuela, Trinidad, Ecuador, and Suriname all had separate deployments.<sup>4</sup>

U.S. government funds also flowed freely to Latin America. While aid came in many forms, such as approximately \$90 million via the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-

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<sup>3</sup> Ethnic diplomacy is a term coined by the author. Typically, diplomacy is categorized by the form it takes: traditional, cultural, public, or back-channel. In this way, I am attempting to emphasize the purpose of the diplomacy rather than the form it takes.

<sup>4</sup> Biennial Reports of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army *July 1, 1941 – June 30, 1943* to the Secretary of War. Original Source from the Center of Military History. *Hyperwar Foundation*. <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/>. Bermuda also had a deployment, but it is considered an Oceanic Island rather than part of Latin America.

American Affairs, the famous Lend-Lease program had a noticeable presence in Latin America.<sup>5</sup> Half (19 out of the 38 countries) supported by this aid program were located in Latin America (see Table 1). While only 1% of the total money of Lend-Lease went to Latin America, it still represented \$455,722,281.45 going towards the defense of the Western Hemisphere—a place where there was not any significant military action. The primary reason the money was provided was to allow Latin American nations to purchase American weapons. Up until the onset of World War II, Latin America had been shut out of purchasing U.S. arms legally. Beginning in 1939, loopholes were used to supply Latin American governments with surplus munitions to both protect themselves against fascism and maintain control over their own countries. FDR himself approved a Liaison Committee (War and State Departments) decision to provide aid to specific Latin American nations for the following reasons:

a. For arming the countries named to the extent indicated, as determined in each case by our estimate of their requirements:

(1) (a) Brazil-To insure her ability to defend herself against a major attack from neighboring states, or from overseas, and against internal disorder, until U. S. armed aid can arrive in sufficient force to insure success.

(b) Mexico-To insure her ability to defend herself against any probable attack from overseas, and against internal disorder, until U.S. armed aid can arrive in sufficient force to insure success.

(2) Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela-To insure their ability to meet and repel any probable minor attack from overseas and to insure their internal stability.

(3) Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic-To insure internal stability.

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<sup>5</sup>The Lend-Lease Act, officially known as An Act to Further Promote the Defense of the United States, was in effect from March 1941 until August 1945 and allowed for substantial financial support to allied countries.

(4) Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Peru-To be determined after requirements for the other republics have been computed and plans to supply them have been approved.

b. For providing these arms on financial terms these Republics can meet.

c. For assistance in the matter of military, naval, and industrial personnel.

d. For adjusting the economic relations between the United States and Latin American states to insure the latter's political cooperation. Financial arrangements to accomplish this adjustment should be made on the basis of accepting the loss as a proper charge against our National defense.<sup>6</sup>

Once Lend-Lease became official policy, Latin American aid for the sake of arms sales went under the new system and saw multiple disbursements. Brazil's extraordinary large number stands out noticeably. This can be explained only in part by these arms sales. Between 1943 and 1945 Brazil dedicated over 25,000 men and women soldiers to the European Theatre, a group known as the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. These troops required huge increases in the amount of U.S. dollars flowing to Brazil, ultimately pushing them up to the fifth largest recipient of U.S. aid during World War II. Their lack of military preparedness before the war coupled with Brazil's close geographic proximity to the fighting in Europe made the Brazilian government particularly concerned about their defenses. At almost every diplomatic meeting where

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<sup>6</sup> Proposed National Policy Re: Supply of Arms to American Republics, 27 July 1940, and General Marshall's pencil notation thereon, indicating the President's approval, WPD 4244-10 as cited in Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *The Framework of Hemisphere Defense*, United States Army in World War II: The Western Hemisphere (Washington,: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1960).

<b><u>TABLE 1:</u></b> <b>Country</b>	<b>Amount of Lend-Lease Aid in USD</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Amount of Lend-Lease Aid in USD</b>
British Empire	31,267,240,530.63	Liberia	6,408,240.13
Soviet Union	11,260,343,603.02	<b>Cuba</b>	<b>5,739,133.33</b>
France	3,207,608,188.75	<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>5,633,989.02</b>
China	1,548,794,965.99	Ethiopia	5,151,163.25
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>355,545,226.43</b>	Iran	4,795,092.50
The Netherlands	230,127,717.63	Iceland	4,795,027.90
Belgium	148,394,457.76	<b>Venezuela</b>	<b>4,336,079.35</b>
Greece	75,475,880.30	<b>Paraguay</b>	<b>1,933,302.00</b>
Norway	51,524,124.36	<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>1,819,403.19</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>36,287,010.67</b>	<b>Dominican Republic</b>	<b>1,610,590.38</b>
Yugoslavia	32,026,355.58	<b>Haiti</b>	<b>1,449,096.40</b>
Turkey	26,640,031.50	Egypt	1,019,169.14
<b>Chile</b>	<b>21,817,478.16</b>	<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>892,358.28</b>
<b>Peru</b>	<b>18,525,771.19</b>	<b>Nicaragua</b>	<b>872,841.73</b>
Saudi Arabia	17,417,878.70	<b>Honduras</b>	<b>732,358.11</b>
Poland	16,934,163.60	Czechoslovakia	413,398.78
<b>Colombia</b>	<b>7,809,732.58</b>	<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>155,022.73</b>
<b>Uruguay</b>	<b>7,148,610.13</b>	<b>Panama</b>	<b>83,555.92</b>
<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>7,063,079.96</b>	Iraq	4,144.14

the Brazilians met with the U.S., hemispheric defenses (especially anti-aircraft installations) were a priority issue. This point ultimately brought the United States and Brazil close together diplomatically; whereas, the other two “ABC” powers, Argentina and Chile, preferred to stand their diplomatic ground with more fervor.

A lot of resources were dedicated to Latin America during the war, Disney films, weapons, and hundreds of millions of dollars are really just the tip of the iceberg. With these facts in hand, an important question is raised, *why* were these resources committed to the only populated continent on earth not seeing immense violence from fascist aggression? A section of a very lengthy letter from the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, “40-page George” Messersmith, to President Franklin Roosevelt sheds light on this purpose as he describes an interesting new problem occurring in Mexico in the middle of the war.

....As a result of the programs of various agencies of our Government interested in the procurement of strategic agricultural products, in this case particularly oil-bearing seeds, we have entered into a number of agreements with Mexico for the production of such oil-bearing seeds. As a result, the farmers in the lowlands, which, as you know are in the more tropical areas in Mexico, and where they can raise three crops of corn in a year on one piece of ground, have already turned a good part of their corn land into oil-bearing seed crops. They do this because the returns are much better from such oil-bearing seeds than from corn. The result is that there is already a serious shortage of corn.... Mexico's program of production of strategic materials in which we are so much interested for war purposes, is going to be seriously endangered if this primary food problem which is confined to corn, cannot be met.... You may be sure that I would not bring this matter to your attention if it were not a matter of primary importance and I have the deep conviction that it is just as important in some ways for us as it is for the Mexicans that the economic and political order now so happily prevailing in Mexico should be maintained. You know what can happen when people get hungry, and you know that such things can happen more easily in Mexico than in some other places.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1943, Volume VI, Part 2, The American Republics, 1943, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965), Document 75. P 432-435.

As most of the histories of Mexico argue, the early 1940s was a time of industrialization in much of the country—often compared to the *Porfiriato* modernization.<sup>8</sup> This economic conversion was so extreme that by 1943 the country most associated with *maize* was not making enough to feed even itself. With the lost access to East Asian resources from Japan's aggressive imperialism, Latin America became the only outside region available to support U.S. production. In response to the loss of East Asia, the National Industrial Conference Board discussed what "essential resources" were available in every Latin American nation. They included oil, lead, gold, silver, wood, zinc, vegetables, sugar, coffee, bauxite, rice, nuts, rubber, cacao, cotton, iron ore, manganese, diamonds, tungsten, platinum, emeralds, quinine, nitrate, copper, coal, guano, tropical produce, cattle, hogs, sheep, hardwoods, and bananas. Oil and rubber proved to be in particularly large demand; interestingly, the bulk of the oil came from Mexico and the best Latin American source for rubber was the interior of Brazil. Unfortunately, this significant contribution of raw materials to the Allied War effort from Latin America during World War II has not been systematically investigated by historians

The importance of Latin America during World War II was tantamount for two basic reasons: hemispheric security—which the U.S. needed to insure in order to execute a two front war—and raw materials for production. In an odd turn in diplomatic affairs, this "need" for Latin American resources, which also included its people as farm

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<sup>8</sup> The *Porfiriato* was the period that Porfirio Díaz ruled as dictator of Mexico, 1876-1911. While the economy declined during certain periods, a general export-led economy resulted in a major building up of infrastructure, urbanization, and general modernization orchestrated by a cooperation between foreigners (mainly the United States) and Díaz's administration. For more on Díaz or the economics of the *Porfiriato* see Robert Phillip Case, "The Path to Personal Power: The First Administration of Porfirio Díaz, 1876-1880" (Dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1973). Michael Johns, *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).



laborers, gave these nations negotiating power that had never been realized previously. Most of the Latin American Republics were long since on the wrong side of a colonial or neocolonial relationship up until this window of diplomatic opportunity. Specifically, they suffered from problems associated with monoculture when the prices of their exports dramatically fell. The conservative governments of Latin America were enjoying the benefits of wartime United States trade and foreign aid and never petitioned the U.S. government to change its economic policies; however, some of them—mainly Mexico—proved willing to utilize their newfound negotiating power. The primary way that this leverage was pressed was in terms of pushing for racial equality. Mexico—and occasionally other Latin American nations—petitioned the U.S. government at the local, state, and federal levels to correct the racial inequality within the United States itself. In the years leading up to war this message fell on deaf ears; however, beginning in 1941 the United States government was motivated to curb what most people would categorize as discrimination due to Latin America's importance both for hemispherical security and raw materials to feed the U.S. industrial war machine.

These claims, as admitted by the State Department itself, were typically and sadly fair representations of racism in the United States. The reality at the time—and sadly even still to this day—was that some Americans segregated, disrespected, and committed hate crimes against people based upon their appearance. This type of behavior is traditionally viewed as racial discrimination; whereas, people reveal their prejudices based on a social construct of racial categories defined by physical appearances. The U.S. government's actions in response to Mexican protests included cultural goodwill events, a crackdown on public incidents of discrimination, the creation

of new bureaucracies, and even state level legislation were all part of a plan to win the favor of Latin American nations—especially neighboring Mexico—and prevent their own Latin American minority groups from interrupting wartime cooperation. The United States was targeting discrimination against a large ethnic group, any person from any Latin American nation, in order to appease Mexico and by extension the rest of Latin America during World War II. In reality, this targeted group consisted of an array of different racial categories; therefore, while the discrimination was “racial” in its practice, this diplomacy was “ethnic” in its design.

The concept of an ethnically targeted diplomacy exists only by standing on the shoulders of a wide array of quality scholarly work. This work, at the most basic level, fits within the historiography of U.S. foreign policy and race—a recent field that has existed for less than two decades. The work produced thus far is insightful, but as a whole it is limited to two categories: American prejudices from *within* American government affecting foreign policy decisions and American prejudices from *outside* American government affecting foreign policy decisions. The *within* category has been discussed more frequently by historians; most notable from this group is Michael Hunt’s *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*.<sup>9</sup> Hunt’s highly acclaimed book covers a handful of different ideological tenets evident in U.S. foreign policy. Concerning race, he points out that from its inception the United States has implemented its policies, both general and foreign, with an understanding that Anglo-Saxons were superior to all other races.<sup>10</sup> A more narrowly focused work is Michael Krenn’s *The Color of Empire*, which discusses with more detail the role that race and racism play, “both consciously and

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<sup>9</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p 91.

subconsciously,” in policy making.<sup>11</sup> The concept of utilizing race as a lens into understanding U.S. foreign policy, as defined by Hunt and Krenn, is extraordinarily insightful and includes a number of other adherents.<sup>12</sup> For the *outside* category of race related diplomacy, the field is well represented by Brenda Gayle Plummer and Mary Dudziak. Plummer’s two most well-known books are *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (1996), which discusses the interests of African-Americans in foreign affairs, and *Windows on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (2003), a compilation work which she edited and contributed to addressing a range of topics.<sup>13</sup> Dudziak, who was a contributor to *Windows on Freedom*, published *Cold War Civil Rights* in 2000, and is perhaps the best example of how racism from outside the Washington establishment can influence foreign policy. Her argument focuses on the connections between Cold War politics and the relative successes of the Civil Rights Movement in the post-war period. *Ethnic Diplomacy* aims to stake new ground in a newly developing historiography by analyzing the race and the U.S.-Mexico relationship during World War II.

*Ethnic Diplomacy* in some ways also overlaps with the emerging historiography which discusses public diplomacy; in particular, chapter five covering the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs delves into this section of international relations

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<sup>11</sup> Michael L. Krenn, *The Color of Empire : Race and American Foreign Relations*, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006). Krenn’s work is cleverly separated into different four content chapters, “White,” “Brown,” “Yellow,” and “Black.” He discusses, in detail, how a racially centered ideology has affected U.S. foreign policy around the world, even bringing his thesis to include the War on Terror.

<sup>12</sup> Some examples include: Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government : Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Kramer’s book argues that Americans used a racial justification for Empire after taking the Philippines in the Spanish-American War.; George White, *Holding the line : Race, Racism, and American Foreign Policy toward Africa, 1953-1961* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005); Michael L. Krenn, *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy from 1900 through World War II* (New York: Garland Pub., 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Window on Freedom : Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); *Rising Wind : Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Krenn was one of the contributors to *Window on Freedom*.

history. The first works in this area cover exclusively what the authors' call "Cultural Diplomacy," most notable among them for the United States in the twentieth century is *Culture and Diplomacy* by Morrell Heald and Lawrence Kaplan. This work emphasizes the intellectual context of culture and diplomacy, while a few years later a more comprehensive work by Frank A. Ninkovich entitled *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Foreign Relations* expanded the discussion to include Bureaucratic-Cultural relations and what he classifies as the "merchants" of atomic-age cultural diplomacy. In reality, these early cultural diplomacy accounts also discussed "public diplomacy," but it was not until more recently when a few scholars have differentiated the two forms of diplomacy. Richard T. Arndt's *The First Resort of Kings* distinguishes the two, stating how public diplomacy is more of a public relations campaign than cultural diplomacy (he later advocates for a return to cultural diplomacy).<sup>14</sup> Another work which focuses on the Cold War, *Practicing Public Diplomacy* by Yale Richmond, simplifies the definition by arguing that public diplomacy is when an agency directly communicates with a population from a foreign nation rather than through diplomats. A quality contribution to the field in 2013, *Empire of Ideas* by Justin Hart, does not differentiate cultural from public diplomacy. Instead he argues that its origins can be traced to FDR's Good Neighbor Policy. *Ethnic Diplomacy* fits within this larger historiography of cultural and public diplomacy; in fact, many of the actions included in this study are examples of cultural or public diplomacy techniques. One could make the case that the United States targeted its own population for a form of internalized public diplomacy under the umbrella of Ethnic Diplomacy. The main distinguishing difference is

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<sup>14</sup>A similar argument is found in Nicholas John Cull, *The Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency : American Public Diplomacy, 1989-2001* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

that *Ethnic Diplomacy* is less concerned about the classification of diplomacy strategy and instead uses the justification behind the cultural, public, and even traditional diplomacy as a form of categorization.

While historians have approached race and foreign policy together previously, the specific U.S. government intervention against racial prejudices on behalf of Mexican-Americans during World War II is uncharted territory for historians. That being said, scholars have *separately* analyzed both the U.S.-Mexican relationship and racial prejudices against Mexican-Americans during World War II.

The vast majority of scholars who have studied U.S.-Mexico relations during the war years do so with a broader scope, analyzing U.S.-Latin America relations in whole. These authors discuss the extent of U.S. intervention, the role of the Good Neighbor Policy, and the economic ties between the United States and most of Latin America during the conflict.<sup>15</sup> One survey from this category concluded that the wartime era was a period where, “Washington aggressively worked in conjunction with the Latin Americans to protect its interests.”<sup>16</sup> In this case, “its interests” refers to the U.S.—and many other Latin American nations—desire to keep Germany out of the French, Danish, and Dutch American holdings. For instance, the Mexican newspaper *El Universal* commented on the “Spirit of Solidarity” shortly after Pearl Harbor on its front page.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the United States wanted to maintain some form of its regional hegemony

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas M. Leonard and John F. Bratzel, *Latin America during World War II*, Jaguar books on Latin America series (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Kyle Longley, *In the Eagle's Shadow : the United States and Latin America* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2002). p 178. In this case, “Washington” refers to the American political establishment as a whole—for foreign policy, the President, State Department, advisors, non-governmental organizations, military, etc. It is assumed by the author that Washington itself is not a consensus decision maker and itself represents a number of separate viewpoints; however, for the sake of understanding U.S. policy with Latin American with some notion of brevity, a unified “Washington” is acceptable terminology.

<sup>17</sup> “Espíritu de Solidaridad,” *El Universal*, January 9 1942.

through the continuation of “economic assistance and programs such as the Inter-American Highway linking markets and providing means of transferring troops and supplies.”<sup>18</sup> Another work declares, “The crowning achievement of Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor policy was hemispheric solidarity during World War II.”<sup>19</sup> These books are representative of a range of scholarship which generally agrees that during the war years, Mexico and the United States had a positive relationship. However, these works are also quick to point out that while relations were good; the United States during the war years wanted something more than just “good neighbor” status. The primary objective of the United States-Latin America relations during the war was ensuring hemispherical solidarity. The disparity from previous administrations is that Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s (FDR) administration attempted to ensure that Latin America had pro-U.S. governments while still operating under The Good Neighbor Policy—which meant their classic interventionist and interference toolsets were unavailable.<sup>20</sup> The U.S. instead turned to new methods, particularly cultural diplomatic methods, economic strength and diplomatic persuasion. It was these “new tactics in response to changing circumstances” that allowed for a unique new federal strategy to combat racial prejudices in the Southwestern United States.<sup>21</sup>

Several scholars interested in U.S.-Latin American relations have addressed the World War II period specifically in terms of cultural diplomacy. Monica Rankin in her book *Mexico, La Patria: Propaganda and Production during World War II*, discusses the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle : Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> The United States has a long history of interventionism in Latin America. Some of the more studied examples include William Walker and the filibusters, Teddy Roosevelt’s Gunboat Diplomacy and his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, the dollar diplomacy of Howard Taft, and Wilson’s interventions in Mexico.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p 87.

comprehensive propaganda campaigns in Mexico from both the Mexican government itself and external groups—with a special emphasis on the United States propaganda coming from the OCIAA—and relates it to the aggressive industrialization happening under the Camacho administration. The other important work in this area is *American's All* by Darlene J. Sadlier. She takes an in-depth look of the OCIAA and its cultural diplomacy strategy across Latin America in her study of FDR's hemispherical solidarity. Of all the works that discuss U.S.-Latin American relations, these two proved most valuable in the contextual framing of *Ethnic Diplomacy*, placing the racial-prejudice targeted diplomacy into its larger context.

An entirely different historiography addresses the civil rights struggles of Mexican-Americans before, during, and after the war. Many scholars have emphasized the importance of World War II as a key factor in curtailing racism between Mexican-Americans and the rest of the population. One scholar noted, "As part of their [the U.S. Government's] effort to unite and motivate all Americans, officials 'discovered' Mexican Americans."<sup>22</sup> For the most part, these works focus strictly on the local level of the struggle.<sup>23</sup> There are a couple of notable exceptions in this field. Both Emilio Zamora's *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas* and Neil Foley's *Mexicans in the Making of America* dedicate about a chapter which relate the Mexican-American Civil Rights

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Griswold del Castillo, *World War II and Mexican American Civil Rights*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008). p 3.

<sup>23</sup> See Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal : Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, Rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).; Michelle Hall Kells, *Héctor P. García : everyday rhetoric and Mexican American civil rights* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006).; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Mexican Americans & World War II*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

Also, it is important to point out that the idea of diplomacy affecting race relations at home is not an entirely new enterprise for historians. Mary Dudziak's benchmark work, *Cold War, Civil Rights*, discusses the interplay between Cold War Foreign Policy and the impact it had on the Civil Rights Movement. Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War civil rights : race and the image of American democracy*, Politics and society in twentieth-century America (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

movement to the Good Neighbor Policy.<sup>24</sup> This work attempts to exist as a bridge between these two well-developed historiographies by establishing itself among the relatively new categorical field that analyzes race and its relationship to foreign policy.

The existence of ethnic diplomacy is significant in the way World War II is understood. The patriotic pride and success that is often associated with the memory of World War II was only possible with good diplomatic relationships with our Latin American neighbors.<sup>25</sup> It is also an interesting case to see how, when, and to what extent the United States government chose to act against racial discrimination.

It is tempting to utilize the common simile and say the story of *Ethnic Diplomacy* is like an onion, multi-layered and could possibly make you cry. While this comparison can be used to an extent, an even better description for ethnic diplomacy is much simpler: lower-case “d” diplomacy. It is a case-study of how people from different nations dealt with one another in terms of race. In order to best analyze ethnic diplomacy, I have utilized separate chapters to emphasize the different elements of ethnic diplomacy.

The first chapter, just like the ethnic diplomacy definition describes it, is about people. Specifically, it covers the major personalities that were involved with the crafting of ethnic diplomacy policy. In this case, “personalities” has a dual meaning of both a group of people and interesting character traits. These people, their personal lives and beliefs setup an important framework for a greater understanding of ethnic

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<sup>24</sup> Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014); Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*, 1st ed., Rio Grande/Río Bravo (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Jordan Patrick Lieser and George Cotkin. *Modern America's Greatest Memory: The World War II Renaissance and the Construction of the Greatest Generation Collective Memory: Thesis*. [San Luis Obispo, Calif.: California Polytechnic State University]. 2008.



diplomacy. Chapter two shifts to the development of State Department policy and examines where, when, and how ethnic diplomacy began.

Chapters three and four represent an interesting turn in the history of ethnic diplomacy. As I was conducting my archival research at the national level of government, I noticed that many of the policies behind ethnic diplomacy were created, ignored, or enforced at the state level. What resulted were interesting cases where U.S. foreign policy was being determined by state governments. Texas and California, respectively, serve as two different examples of this unusual situation.

Chapter five shifts focus to cover an essential, yet somewhat separate area of U.S.-Latin American relations. The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs overlapped with the State Department, Texas, and California as they practiced ethnic diplomacy; however, it also covered a much broader area of US-Latin American relations. In this chapter, I tackle the broader organization, but give special attention to the primarily cultural and public diplomacy elements that coincided with ethnic diplomacy.

In the final chapter, I consider Mexico's role in the enactment of ethnic diplomacy, the political environment of Mexico during World War II, and the long term impacts of these policies on both nations. Since ethnic diplomacy is indeed diplomacy between multiple nations, Mexico's half of ethnic diplomacy and contextual World War II history provides a vital part of the overall analysis and also helps explain ethnic diplomacies limitations.

In the conclusion, everything is brought together for an overall analysis of the impact and importance of *Ethnic Diplomacy*. Here, I consider its implications into multiple fields of history and interdisciplinary connections.

# Chapter 1: The Framework of Ethnic Diplomacy

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Paul Harvey's famous radio signoff, "And now you know the rest of the story," is a fitting statement to understand the history surrounding *Ethnic Diplomacy*. The willingness of the State Department—or any government body in the 1940s—to actively seek to combat racial prejudices of any kind is unheard of at this point in U.S. history; therefore, the environment in which ethnic diplomacy existed is perhaps as important as the story of ethnic diplomacy itself. As with other case studies, knowing the relevant historiography and historical context makes it a more useful historical example. Ethnic diplomacy first and foremost fits within the larger history of the Good Neighbor Policy. While ethnic diplomacy is new ground in international relations, the Good Neighbor Policy has been thoroughly explored by historians. Standing on the intellectual shoulders of these great scholars, ethnic diplomacy can be situated within this larger history. In addition, the time period that ethnic diplomacy operated within was instrumental in its existence. World War II changed both the international and national priorities of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration. FDR even famously quipped, "Dr. New Deal" has become "Dr. Win the War." The reality was simply that political priorities had changed due to the international conflicts. Specifically relevant for ethnic diplomacy was the changing Mexico-U.S. relationship and government's response to racial discrimination on the home front. The final important contextual element is a bureaucratic argument: Ethnic diplomacy was created by a group of people, not crafted in a single resolution nor officially announced. Due to the loose nature of its implementation, the figures behind its inspiration and creation are vital to understanding why it was presented in the manner in which it was. Ethnic diplomacy was possible due

to a window of opportunity framed by a series of unique circumstances: The Good Neighbor Policy, World War II, FDR and his staff.<sup>26</sup>

## **The Good Neighbor Policy**

The first and most vital of these framed circumstances for ethnic diplomacy is the Good Neighbor Policy: a vague policy premise which promised Latin Americans that the United States would be better neighbors, predominantly through non-interventionism. Since the 1950s historians have thoroughly discussed the depths of the overarching program which dictated the administration's approach to Latin American relations for over a decade. The study began when Donald Dozer introduced the simple question: "are we good neighbors?" and attributed the Good Neighbor Policy changes to a set of circumstances in the Roosevelt Administration.<sup>27</sup> Most modern readers of this 1959 book conclude that "We were no better neighbors than we had to be" under FDR.<sup>28</sup> After Dozer broke the ground, the historiography next turned to a number of excellent analytical approaches which focused on the motivations behind the policy changes while still telling the story itself. This group is highlighted by scholars such as David Green, Lloyd Gardener, Samuel Flagg Bemis, and David Lloyd Meacham. These

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<sup>26</sup> It is more than a fair argument to suggest that Avila Camacho and his administration should be added to this list. Ethnic diplomacy is obviously a form of two-way diplomacy, to best facilitate this discussion the relevant context of the Camacho administration is saved for chapter six.

<sup>27</sup> This was counter to many who credited the origins of The Good Neighbor Program to President Herbert Hoover. Those that side with Hoover as the originator of the policy credit him inventing the he helped settled the Tacna-Arica boundary dispute between Peru and Chile. It was here that he reportedly mentioned being a "good neighbor." Secondly, his administration publicly adopted the Clark Memorandum in 1930 which drew back on the Roosevelt Corollary which clarified that its purpose was for the United States standing against European intervention, not Latin America.

<sup>28</sup> Frederick Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1995).

historians created a historiographical dichotomy questioning the motivation behind the program: economics vs. security.

Green and Gardener emphasized an economic strategy behind Good Neighborism; whereas, arguing that the reasoning behind the friendly front was simply a method of continuing (and actually expanding) Latin America as an ideal region for U.S. investors. Their economic argument fits into the broader spectrum of U.S. foreign relations historiography personified by renowned historians William Appleman Williams and Walter LaFeber. Frederick Pike, in *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos*, argues that this section of the historiography can be expanded to also include “more ideologically rigid historians, some of whom are Marxists of one stripe or another.” The radicals he refers to have argued that FDR's policies were actually a continuation of the United States' capitalist goals to completely dominate the hemisphere and to make certain Latin America fit into the larger exploitative American empire.<sup>29</sup>

Bemis, Mecham, and Dana G. Munro best represent the security side of the dichotomy. They collectively emphasize the U.S. priority towards protecting U.S. interests. These scholars argue that Good Neighborism was a means to protect U.S. businesses, American owned land, and—perhaps most importantly—their access to agricultural and mineral resources in Latin America. From looking at the entire historiography, there is an obvious overlap between these security and economic interests in Latin America. Since the two are so “intimately intertwined” when it comes

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<sup>29</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 50th anniversary ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009); Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions : the United States in Central America*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

to the U.S.'s interests in the Western Hemisphere, it is no surprise that over time a synthesis occurred from the two canonical schools.<sup>30</sup>

Authors such as Fredrick Pike and Hans Morgenthau were the first to marry the two concerns together with a more pragmatic understanding of policymaker actions.<sup>31</sup> Pike himself labeled this the realpolitik school of diplomatic history. They argue that a nation *should* make military *and* economic strength their priority. However, having the ability to express this power does not mean that exerting it upon a neighbor will result in the desired outcome. In other words, realpolitik adherents still argue that power comes from traditional sources (military and economic), but how that power is utilized is perhaps more important. Policies therefore should be more of a traditional “this” for “that” negotiation rather than policies driven by theory. These adherents believe that imposing U.S. ideologies upon unwilling recipients (such as which was commonplace in the decades prior to the Good Neighbor Policy and later during the Cold War) was meritless and counterproductive; instead, practical steps should be taken to achieve whatever currently are the desired results. For example, attempts to enforce stability (as perceived by the United States government or American businessman) typically resulted in some degree of resentment; however, advocating non-intervention could instead gain support from nations vital to U.S. hemispheric interests. Adherents to this school of thought also argue that FDR himself was a practitioner of realpolitik. He

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p xii. Dana Gardner Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Area* (Boston,: World peace foundation, 1934); *The Latin American Republics, a History*, 3d ed. (New York,: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960); Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin American Policy of the United States* (New York,: Harcourt, 1943); J. Lloyd Mechem, *A Survey of United States-Latin American Relations* (Boston,: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

<sup>31</sup> Pike is also noteworthy for his view that while President Herbert Hoover originated the Good Neighbor Policy, it was FDR who coined the term and systematically implemented it. Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest : A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

believed that if left without reasons to dislike the United States, Latin America would discover that a relationship with the United States had economic, cultural, and moral advantages. Therefore, FDR's non-intervention policy, trade agreements, and ethnic diplomacy work as examples of policies which respect power, but also show a pragmatic path to the desired outcome.

Ethnic diplomacy could be utilized as evidence for any of these three schools of thought: Those scholars who privileged economics in their arguments could emphasize the importance of Mexican laborers in U.S. agriculture or Latin American resources—such as rubber or oil—during a time of war. Security adherents have an obvious argument given that the racially motivated policies were at least partially prompted only by the U.S. entry into World War II after Pearl Harbor. Additionally, one could cite hemispherical defense initiatives from the major diplomatic meetings during FDR's administration to further support the Security school's argument. Nevertheless, it is really no surprise that it fits best as evidence within a synthesized argument. While on the surface ethnic diplomacy seems to be a humanitarian policy, its limitations reveal a deeper understanding. One of main goals of ethnic diplomacy was to help avoid racially charged disturbances which would threaten the security and economic interests of the United States. Ethnic diplomacy was first and foremost a pragmatic solution to this potential problem and was more of a series of diplomatic reactions initially. In addition racism threatened the relationship between the United States and Latin America at a time when the United States needed Latin America more than ever before to help protect the Western Hemisphere and fuel the U.S. war machine. This reality gave nations like Mexico more weight in their diplomatic negotiations with the U.S. If the U.S.



government could appease Mexico in this regard, it could count on uninterrupted cooperation. These points make ethnic diplomacy more the right policy at the right time instead of an idea created from a theory designed to promote U.S. interests.

## **World War II**

World War II changed a great many things in the world, two of which are key to understanding ethnic diplomacy. First, the way racial relations were addressed by the United States government and secondly how the United States diplomatically dealt with Mexico.

Generally speaking, World War II allowed for some progress to be made against racial discrimination because the administration was willing to compromise in order to ensure unity and prevent civil unrest. The specific policy changes related to ethnic diplomacy with the onset of war are discussed at length in the next chapter; however, it is important to note that even before “the day of infamy” FDR had already sought to avoid racial unrest on the homefront. The most notable example came in June of 1941 when a group of African-Americans led by A. Phillip Randolph and The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters pressured for more workplace equality. Their most effective strategy was termed the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) which came about after a meeting at the White House. Randolph, Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and T. Arnold Hill of the National Urban League (NUL) met with FDR’s labor team in an attempt to end segregation within

the defense industries. The result was the opposite then what they had hoped. The White House press release which came from the meeting actually reaffirmed a segregated workforce and made it seem as though Randolph, White and Hill endorsed the policy. As the MOWM committee was formed, Randolph became determined that the march occur. This determination caught Roosevelt's attention personally. New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia and Eleanor Roosevelt met with Randolph and White on behalf of the president. The First Lady insisted and La Guardia concurred—according to Randolph—that FDR was “greatly wrought up” over the march and hoped for a way in which it could be called off. Randolph did not waiver and, while polite, continued to plan the March on Washington. FDR next called Randolph to the White House for a face-to-face meeting. In the meeting FDR showed no change in position. He was unwilling to issue an executive order, because then he would “be required to sign it for other groups” as well and Randolph was unwilling to accept any compromise. Eventually La Guardia had a change in position. He urged Secretary Knox and Roosevelt that the administration should consider a permanent solution, the main reason being that he was convinced that Randolph would go through with the march. Roosevelt's reluctant answer was the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) via Executive Order 8802. The most quoted element of the order reads, “there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color or national origin.”<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, as the state department was fielding complaints from Mexican nationals and Mexican-Americans, this organization was often

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<sup>32</sup> For more on Philip A. Randolph's long struggle for civil rights see Cornelius L. Bynum *A Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2010). Cynthia Taylor, *A. Philip Randolph: The Religious Journey of an African American Leader* (New York City, New York: NYU Press, 2015). The “or government” element was added in the second draft as Randolph was not satisfied without its inclusion.

included in the conversation. Many of the complaints in both California and Texas were eventually forwarded to the FEPC, even a few that were only loosely related to the FEPC mission of defense industry or government.

The FEPC worked with the OCIAA even more closely than with the State Department. Lawrence Cramer, Executive Secretary of the FEPC collaborated with the OCIAA's Division of Inter-American Activities to create a campaign specifically targeting employment discrimination against Mexicans in February of 1942. The FEPC/OCIAA strategy was to target a few "major cases" in the Southwest with the hope that it would "bring the rest of the industries along." Cramer admitted in a letter to the OCIAA that "the worst offenders" of discrimination against Mexicans were in Texas, specifically the oil companies on the Gulf Coast. Ultimately, the "few cases" of 1942 proved to not provide enough motivation for the region's hiring practices and the FEPC opened up regional offices across the Southwest in the summer of 1943, including specifically investigated the gulf oil companies.<sup>33</sup> Some scholars have argued that the overall the FEPC was ineffective in making significant changes towards integrating the wartime industries workplaces; however, it is clear that the OCIAA and the State Department working in conjunction with the FEPC made a significant effort in the Southwest.<sup>34</sup>

The most relevant example of how World War II changed the administration's perspective on Mexican relations involves more U.S. oil companies and their long standing claims for Mexican oil. Roosevelt inherited an already sensitive diplomatic issue when he assumed the presidency in 1933. During the Mexican Revolution, the

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<sup>33</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 92-93.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

foreign—primarily U.S.—ownership of the oil fields fueled the revolutionary spirit of people, while the companies complained to Washington that yields were low and production was threatened from the instability of Mexico. Both sides were never satisfied at the same time and often both sides were completely unsatisfied with the current arrangement. With the close relationship that U.S. companies enjoyed with U.S. government in the 1910s, this tense situation was of the utmost importance to US-Mexican relations. In 1917, when the Mexican Constitution was passed, the famed Article 27 specifically reserved subsoil rights to the state; however, as with much of the Mexican Constitution in that era, the implementation of these subsoil rights was a much more difficult reality. Over the next few decades U.S. oil companies were actively supported by the U.S. State Department, and in fact, on two occasions the U.S. seriously considered armed intervention to protect these companies mineral rights. With this support, the primarily U.S. firms retained nearly complete control of Mexican oil.<sup>35</sup>

What one scholar has called the “biggest challenge” to the Good Neighbor Policy occurred in 1938, when nationalization-minded president Lázaro Cárdenas invoked Article 27 and made all of Mexico’s oil state-owned.<sup>36</sup> Even before the nationalization when compromises could have been made, Hull and the State Department vehemently worked in favor of retaining oil rights for the U.S. companies. Once Cárdenas’ decision came down, the State Department then worked for a reversal during the first year. Hull attempted to curb U.S. trade with the newly formed *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX) and ultimately succeeded with a 61% decrease in sales to the United States. Cárdenas

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<sup>35</sup> Lorenzo Meyer, *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977).

<sup>36</sup> Clayton R. Koppes, "The Good Neighbor Policy and the Nationalization of Mexican Oil: A Reinterpretation," *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (1982): 62-81. Reserving subsoil rights for the state was not a radical departure from tradition for Mexico. In colonial times, Iberian monarchies did the same.

however was unwavering, prompting Secretary Hull to privately refer to the *cárdenistas* as “those Communists.” After no progress was made, FDR, Hull, and Welles opted for a new strategy. They drafted up an agreement which allowed Mexico to retain oil rights, but gave a fifty year operating contract to the U.S. oil companies with complete control of management and a small slice of profits heading to the Mexican government. Cárdenas again rebuffed the attempt to regain control by the U.S. oil companies and this second stalemate persisted until he was out of office. Ávila Camacho had a much different approach (his economic policies are discussed in chapter six) which embraced Roosevelt’s wartime plan and was much more open to compromise. Less than a month before Pearl Harbor, the State Department broke their close relationship with the oil firms (and therefore their hard stance) and setup the bi-national Cooke-Zevada commission to reach a fair compensation figure. The final number was \$23,995,991 with an additional \$5 million dollars in interest over four years. By most accounts this number was generous for the U.S. side; however, the firms were not willing to accept the loss of future income—which they estimated as an additional \$200 million. Almost two years later they acquiesced and on October 1, 1943 the firms accepted the commission’s figure.<sup>37</sup>

Historians have noted that the State Department’s divergence from the oil companies in 1941 was a direct result of the changing security situation. The best evidence that something changed within the administration comes from Roosevelt’s insistence that Vice President Wallace attend the inauguration of Ávila Camacho in late 1940. Roosevelt and the military wanted army and navy bases in Mexico, but the oil

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Meyer, *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942*: 66; Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*.

problem had impeded any negotiations on that front. Wallace, being the goodwill emissary for this matter, placed a wreath on the monument commemorating the young soldiers, the famous *niños heroes*, who died defending Mexico City against the U.S. invasion in 1847. Wallace ultimately concluded that cooperation was more likely with Camacho than Cárdenas for any and all affairs. Unfortunately, as historian Clayton R. Koppes argues, this argument is a bit too simplistic. While it shows FDR had a change in priorities for Latin America, it does not explain why Hull and Welles never wavered in their insistence to return U.S. oil companies to Mexico *after* accepting the deal. This dual handed reality aligns perfectly with the limited scope of ethnic diplomacy. Hull and Welles were willing to work within FDR's hemispherical unity agenda with the onset of World War II and proved it here with the acceptance of the nationalization of Mexican oil. Just as racial unrest could threaten the relationship with Mexico, so could the lack of an agreement over Mexican oil. The State Department was operating within a window of time where they could not jeopardize Mexico's friendship, but—as proven by their repeated efforts to regain access to Mexican oil—they still believed in private U.S. access to Latin American resources as key to U.S. interests and feared that the rest of Latin America would follow Mexico's model.<sup>38</sup>

Although the U.S. adhered to the Good Neighbor Policy, relations with Mexico remained strained due to the oil controversy. The U.S. attempted to “drive a hard bargain” in forcing the Mexicans to give what U.S. officials saw as adequate compensation for the oil expropriation and Mexican officials strongly resisted. Yet, at the same time, U.S. officials were also concerned about improving U.S.-Mexican

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Koppes, "The Good Neighbor Policy and the Nationalization of Mexican Oil: A Reinterpretation."

relations—even to the point of investigating Anglo-Mexican racism. This represents the concept that U.S. foreign relations towards a particular country is rarely unified within the bureaucracy and for Mexico in the 1940s, the policies were especially complicated, arguably even contradictory.

## **Diplomacy and Bureaucracy**

Ethnic diplomacy, just like the rest of the Good Neighbor Policy, was not created in a single monumental treaty or agreement. There were never any “we won’t be racist anymore” clauses in treaties, constitutional amendments, or specific Presidential declarations. Instead, a bureaucratic team of public officials crafted it under the guise of FDR’s overarching diplomatic agenda for Latin America. FDR, the State Department, the Office of Inter-American Affairs, state governments, and grass-root interest groups all contributed; but, most of the decision making stemmed from the high level bureaucrats. This section will focus on their motivations in crafting ethnic diplomacy. This reality—that individual people are responsible for making policy decisions—means that their personal lives and problems are as important as the Good Neighbor Policy itself and World War II in their contributions to the creation of ethnic diplomacy.

At the very top of the ethnic diplomacy policy was FDR, albeit mostly indirectly. For the most part, he is missing from the history of ethnic diplomacy. While FDR did play a role in crafting ethnic diplomacy, he did not have the same amount of influence as he did in other foreign relations matters elsewhere in the world. FDR’s personal

opinions on Latin America's importance help shed some light on his administration's handling of race relations between the United States and Latin America.

While working in the Wilson administration as Assistant Secretary of the Navy—the same post his cousin Teddy once held—he witnessed firsthand how Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare could propel the United States into war. One of his many reactions to the German aggression was to warn those who would listen against their potential infiltration in to the Western hemisphere.<sup>39</sup> In his 1928 *Foreign Affairs* article "Our Foreign Policy: A Democratic View," Roosevelt laid out his foreign policy views, which revealed a major emphasis on Latin America; so much so that he demanded an end to interventionism in the region. Roosevelt boldly advocated "the duty of the United States to associate with itself other American Republics, to give intelligent joint study to the problem, and, if conditions warrant, to offer the helping hand or hands in the name of the Americas. Singlehanded intervention by us in the affairs of other nations must end with the cooperation of others we shall have more order in this hemisphere and less dislike."<sup>40</sup>

Many scholars have pointed to this article as the beginning of his Good Neighbor Policy; however, even from this early point it was not a clear or concise policy.<sup>41</sup> Roosevelt discussed his personal imperialist experiences in Haiti and the recent Republican interventions, specifically the current Nicaraguan affair—arguing that these incidents ultimately damaged the U.S. However, FDR's partisan text established a

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<sup>39</sup> Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs : Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). 8.

<sup>40</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Our Foreign Policy: A Democratic View," *Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 4 (1928). 584.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).



degree of difference between his actions in Haiti and that of Republican leaders beginning in 1921:

In Haiti a worse situation faced us. That Republic was in chronic trouble, and as it is close to Cuba the bad influence was felt across the water. Presidents were murdered, governments fled, several time a year [sic]. We landed our marines and sailors only when the unfortunate Chief Magistrate of the moment was dragged out of the French Legation, cut into six pieces and thrown to the mob. Here again we cleaned house, restored order, built public works and put governmental operation on a sound and honest basis. We are still there. It is true, however, that in Santo Domingo and especially in Haiti we seem to have paid too little attention to making the citizens of these states more capable of reassuming the control of their own governments. But we have done a fine piece of material work, and the world ought to thank us.<sup>42</sup>

This was FDR's final parlay into foreign policy prior to the 1932 election—he avoided the topic after the stock market crash due to popular opinion favoring a focus on domestic issues—and it appears as though FDR was latching on to a non-intervention policy. While his famous 1928 *Foreign Affairs* article was a marked difference from his previous position as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, it was a policy position gaining traction among Americans by the late 1920s. While this does represent a reversal of thought on FDR's part, he remained non-committal and slightly ambiguous. As is evident in his phrasing, he was unwilling to completely stand aloof from Latin American affairs and retract the effectiveness of his own previous interventions.

The appearance of FDR's reversal of foreign policy towards Latin America could have been based on personal experiences or perhaps was simply a knee-jerk reaction after losing the 1920 Vice Presidential bid where he touted Wilsonian internationalism—which called for a more activist U.S. foreign policy and more interventionism. No matter what caused the reversal, it was clear that something had changed once

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<sup>42</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Our Foreign Policy: A Democratic View," *Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 4 (1928). 584.

Roosevelt moved into the White House. Initially, he had supported his cousin's taking of the Panama Canal and the many military incursions in Latin America. In fact, when he served as Undersecretary of the Navy, he bragged that he had written Haiti's constitution (a gross exaggeration which would later be used by political rivals who labeled him an imperialist). Once in office, he reinvigorated his interest in Latin American foreign policy immediately by establishing the Good Neighbor Policy concept in his inaugural address. While it was not clearly defined at this point (or perhaps at any point), his first term heavily emphasized the end of intervention and the promotion of trade with Latin America. Since the Latin Americans had pressed the U.S. for a promise not to intervene militarily in Latin America, the Good Neighbor policy significantly warmed U.S.-Latin American relations immediately. The result was the ending of marine occupations in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, which helped portray the United States as at least *better* neighbors.

While FDR's ambiguous foreign policy leadership has been a popular topic among historians, most of his interest was pointed towards Europe during his tenure. Rather than hack out policies with other American heads of state, he often left the region to his diplomatic representatives. He allowed his foreign policy to function in a similar way to that of his domestic policies. He utilized multiple individuals and even multiple government branches to allow different ideas and plans to be hashed out—eventually giving support to whomever he pleased.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For examples see Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform : New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

This approach, while quite characteristic of FDR as a leader, is actually more the rule than the exception when it comes to U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America. United States presidents have rarely grabbed the reins themselves when dealing with Latin America. Thus, FDR's task of preventing an international controversy over American racial prejudice fell to a handful of specialists in the State Department and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. The most prevalent purveyors of racially related issues for Latin America were the State Department's Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles and Coordinator Nelson Rockefeller.<sup>44</sup>

While Latin American affairs were not FDR's focus, there was a brief period when he provided his "Good Neighbors" with a surprising amount of attention. Latin America was an essential component to his foreign policy once Nazi, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish Nationalist aggression became evident, and he was still hindered by the Neutrality Acts. FDR was unable to intervene in Europe, Asia, and was also hindered from aiding Ethiopia or the Spanish Nationalists as they fought against superior foes. However, thanks to the popularity of the Good Neighbor Policy, he could progress his global ideologies in a region that was more apt to support his ideas. By coupling a message of hemispherical unity within the West with harsh criticism of the Eastern belligerents, he attempted to reach beyond the Americas. This approach dually served FDR's political interests by quieting some of the criticism he received from being overly involved in the Eastern hemisphere's affairs. One example of this came during a press conference in March 1935 when he responded to a question on German rearmament by stating, "I think we can only properly maintain the general principles of the good

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<sup>44</sup> Rockefeller's role is discussed in detail in chapter six.

neighbor and hope that the American principle will be extended to Europe..."<sup>45</sup> A few months later, he would repeat the global designs of the Good Neighbor policy at the San Diego Exposition, "...In every continent and in every clime, Nation will follow Nation in providing by deed as well as by word their adherence to the ideal of the Americas—I am a good neighbor."<sup>46</sup> The following year the outlook in Europe had only worsened and FDR showed an adherence to his use of the Western Hemisphere with his famous "I hate war" speech at Chautauqua, New York. In the speech he showed a desire to banish war forever from the Americas and the further hope of extending that vision globally. He even presented the message at the Inter-American conference at Buenos Aires in 1936, by posing and subsequently answering his own question: "The madness of a great war in another part of the world would affect us and threaten our good in a hundred ways.... Can we, the republics of the New World, help the Old World to avert the catastrophe (sic) which impends? Yes, I am confident that we can."<sup>47</sup>

FDR eventually integrated this idea of utilizing Latin America as a soap box for Eastern Hemisphere problems into a Pan-American Day speech. In 1939 he officially made a speech on Pan-American Day for the first time since his inauguration year. While the 1933 speech focused entirely on better relations and "the thought that on this day the attention of the citizens of the twenty-one Republics of America is focused on the common ties-historical, cultural, economic, and social-which bind them to one

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<sup>45</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Presidential Press Conference, Mar. 20, 1935, Reel 3." *Press Conferences of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945*, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum.

<sup>46</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt and Samuel I. Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 13 vols. (New York,: Russell & Russell, 1969).

<sup>47</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Solidarity of the Continent," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 5, no. 14 (May 1939): 434.

another;" the 1939 speech had a notably more global focus.<sup>48</sup> He made the point that American nations hold conferences in an effort to continue peace, while "Elsewhere in the world, to hold conferences such as ours, which meet every five years, it is necessary to fight a major war, until exhaustion or defeat at length brings governments together to reconstruct their shattered fabrics." FDR went on to further compare the "encircled" feeling of an unnamed European nation to the interdependency and neighborly qualities present among the American republics. It was with this pretext that he decided to once again disconnect his foreign policy goals with the historical record of the United States by stating, "dreams of conquest appear to us [American republics] as ridiculous as they are criminal. Pledges designed to prevent aggression, accompanied by the open doors of trade and [economic] intercourse, and bound together by common will to cooperate peacefully, make warfare between us as outworn and useless as the weapons of the Stone Age." Lastly in his speech he returned to hemispherical unity by commenting on how the peace of the Western Hemisphere needs to be defended "to the fullest extent of our strength, matching force to force if any attempt is made to subvert our institutions, or to impair the independence of any one of our group."<sup>49</sup> FDR repeated this point with a similar line the following year, "We have only asked that the world go with us in the path of peace. But we shall be able to keep that way open only if we are prepared to meet force with force if [a] challenge is ever made."<sup>50</sup>

FDR's attention to Latin American was once again evident in the summer of 1940 when military and economic aid for Latin America was brought to the discussion table.

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<sup>48</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address Before the Special Session of the Governing Board of the Pan American Union in Celebration of Pan American Day." Washington D.C., April 12 1933. *Ibiblio.org*

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Unity of the Americas," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 6, no. 14 (May 1940): 422-23.

The Axis aggression in Africa coupled with numerous reports of Nazi sedition in South America created a fear within FDR and his administration that the Nazis would attempt to claim Dutch and French holdings in the Caribbean and perhaps one-day use that as a stepping stone toward an invasion in South America. FDR initially agreed only to showcase naval force in Brazil and Uruguay, begin military talks, and authorize a Congressional resolution to sell coastal defense and ships to the Latin American countries in exchange for cash. For his part, Welles championed further support, suggesting a stronger naval presence and a credit system for the purchase of arms. From Welles's perspective, the additional aid would be enough to make an impression among Latin American nations that the United States was serious about hemispherical security; without them he feared it would be much less convincing. FDR acquiesced to his most-trusted Latin American expert to an extent, providing a handful of additional ships and a limited amount of military supplies to be purchased on credit. Mexico and Brazil got the first opportunity to purchase the supplies and the other South American nations north of Brazil got access to what was left over.<sup>51</sup> Piecemeal diplomatic goodwill endeavors towards Latin America already had precedent when the war changed the diplomatic priorities of the United States. The security of the hemisphere and U.S. economic connections with their southern neighbors were vastly more important after Pearl Harbor and the Japanese seizure of much of the Pacific; fortunately the United States already had a rough system in place to assuage Latin American concerns.

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<sup>51</sup> Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*: 233-34.

In the middle of World War II FDR made arguably his grandest diplomatic gesture towards Latin America when he went on a brief tour of Mexico. In what was a highly publicized affair, Roosevelt met with Mexican President Ávila Camacho in Monterrey, Nuevo León and Corpus Christi, Texas on April 20 and 21, 1943 respectively. The two heads of state traveled together between the appearances, where they reportedly got along exceedingly well. When speaking to the public, the two leaders both emphasized the same principles: hemispherical unity, cooperation, and the importance of their wartime alliance. The trip, as various newspapers reminded their readers, was also historic. It marked the first time an acting President had visited the interior of Mexico; in fact, only one other, President William Howard Taft, had ever even crossed the border.<sup>52</sup> It is worth iterating here that FDR's visit to Mexico, or any Latin American nation, was significant by itself; however, FDR's visit in the middle of a war taking place on every other continent in the world reinforces the high value assigned to specifically Camacho and Mexico, but by extension the entirety of Latin America.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Taft met with Porfirio Díaz in El Paso on the eve of the Mexican Revolution and walked across to Ciudad Juárez on October 16, 1909. It is also relevant to point out that there was an assassination attempt on Taft and/or Díaz during this first official visit. A man was caught with a pistol in his palm intending to use it on Taft or Díaz or both. While I say this somewhat in jest, Roosevelt was the first sitting President to visit Mexico and NOT have an assassin try to kill him (as far as we know anyways). Perhaps this could even be evidence of the success of FDR's Good Neighbor Policy and his attention paid to his neighbors to the South. Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Secret War in El Paso : Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 82. Further details of the agreements made during this visit are discussed in chapter six where they can be analyzed as part of Mexico's role in ethnic diplomacy.

## Sumner Welles Important Role as Latin American Policymaker

Given this heightened status of Latin America and an increased interest from the President, the importance of Welles and (especially) Rockefeller for ethnic diplomacy without contextual knowledge is unsuspected. Traditionally, the commander-in-chief's top diplomatic official, the Secretary of State, would play the major role in forming policy; however, FDR opted for a somewhat different approach by the selection of Tennessee Senator Cordell Hull. According to the man who preceded Hull, veteran statesman (and future Secretary of War under FDR) Henry Stimson, "Roosevelt had told him that he intended to be his own Secretary of State, and Hull had apparently knuckled under to it."<sup>54</sup> Despite Stimson's inevitable bias when discussing the man that replaced him, there is definitely some truth to his statement. With regard to U.S. policy toward Latin America in particular, FDR would rely on Welles instead of Hull. William Phillips, Hull's Undersecretary of State from 1933-36, was a key ally for Hull. Phillips, a Republican, managed the department's bureaucracy efficiently, while Hull generally stayed outside of the day-to-day operations. This pattern of hiring two antagonists in the same-policy area, who would then fight each other, was not a unique occurrence in FDR's administration; however, Hull and Welles provide a classic example.<sup>55</sup>

In 1933, Roosevelt and his newly installed State Department leadership got their first chance to discuss Inter-American affairs on a big stage at the Seventh International Conference of the Americas, held in Montevideo, Uruguay. FDR tapped Hull to lead the

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<sup>54</sup> Henry Lewis Stimson with Francis Loewenheim and Harold Langley, *The Politics of Integrity: The Diaries of Henry L. Stimson, 1931-1945* (McGraw Hill, 1976).

<sup>55</sup> For more on Welles see Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles : FDR's Global Strategist : a Biography*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Christopher D. O'Sullivan and Gutenberg-e (Program), *Sumner Welles, Postwar Planning, and the Quest for a New World Order, 1937-1943*, Gutenberg-e series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).



United States delegation. Hull, seeing it primarily as a goodwill tour, did not want to attend (although his memoirs say differently); however, thanks to FDR's insistence Hull became the first American Secretary of State to serve on a Pan-American delegation while still in office. FDR made the announcement publicly and endorsed the trip as a way to broaden hemispheric understanding. Hull, prior to leaving, seemed to put a bit more emphasis on economics as he told reporters that he hoped to get a reciprocal trade agreement (Hull's marquee issue throughout his public service) at the conference.

At the conference, the delegates wrote and signed the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States. While race or racial prejudices did not enter into any of the resolutions, there were a few noteworthy diplomatic victories. Hull got Argentinian delegate Carlos Saavedra Llamas to agree to a reciprocal trade agreement and a couple articles were added in regards to preventing military interventions. Perhaps the most interesting among these was article eleven, which guaranteed states would not recognize any member's territory acquired by force; however, the article which headlined the conference was number eight, "No state has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another."<sup>56</sup> In a radio broadcast on his last night in Montevideo, Hull pronounced a new era in hemispheric relations, declaring—in his mind—the true start of the Good Neighbor Policy.<sup>57</sup>

Shortly after Hull's return, Roosevelt publicly showed his support for the non-intervention policy at the Washington Mayflower Hotel at the commemorative Woodrow

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<sup>56</sup> Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States. Unsurprisingly, Article 11 did not apply retroactively to the United States' acquisition of Puerto Rico, California, Texas, etc.

<sup>57</sup> As described in a correspondence between Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Mexican Ambassador Josephus Daniels, Dec. 19, 1933, 710.11/1900, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington D.C.

Wilson birthday banquet on December 28, 1933. The main point of the speech suggests that the United States should cooperate with—but not join—the League of Nations; however, he first fittingly mentioned that Woodrow Wilson had initiated the nonintervention doctrine in Latin America twenty-years prior with a speech in Mobile, Alabama. Roosevelt declared that evening at around 10:30pm that,

“President Wilson first enunciated the definite statement, ‘that the United States will never again seek one additional foot of territory by conquest.’ The United States accepted that declaration of policy. The President went further, pointing out with special reference to our Latin American relations, our neighbors, that material interest must never be made superior to human liberty.”<sup>58</sup>

Roosevelt later backtracked a bit by qualifying Wilson’s promise as inconsistent with the intervention in to a World War; however, he failed to mention any of his incursions into Latin America—perhaps corresponding with Wilson’s own view of the invasion of Mexico.<sup>59</sup> In spite of this historical oversight, FDR’s Mayflower Speech laid the ground work for his policy towards Latin America for years to come.

Hull’s reciprocal trade agreement was a major victory in his own eyes; nevertheless, despite FDR’s endorsement, the President was reluctant to allow Hull a free hand in Latin America. Hull did not speak Spanish, had a lack of cultural awareness of the region, and did not boast the intellectual credentials of many of FDR’s advisors. In 1937 he personally appointed Benjamin Sumner Welles as Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American affairs—a practice he did with most of the State

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<sup>58</sup> Roosevelt, Franklin D. *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Year of Crisis, 1933. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States.* Vol 2: 545.

<sup>59</sup> Then Secretary of State Robert Lansing actually suggested to Wilson that, “we should avoid the use of the word ‘Intervention’ and deny that any invasion of Mexico is for the sake of intervention.” From Source: Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 275–277. For more see *The United States and the Mexican Revolution: "A Danger for All Latin American Countries," Letters from Venustiano Carranza* and *John Reed's "What About Mexico?": The United States and the Mexican Revolution* <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4948>.

Department's higher offices, thus taking away appointing power from Hull—a man who possessed the specialist skill-set that Hull was lacking. Welles, who preferred to go by his middle name, had an Ivy League education and a distinguished family pedigree of public service. Welles was considered a very formal individual by his contemporaries. He would greet subordinates by placing his fingers on the edge of their desk and then bowing. As a colleague, he proved to be extremely professional, writing the appropriate memorandums and resolving issues succinctly. One interesting personal detail was that he conducted himself very differently when it came to his Latin American guests. He was much more personal and friendly, exuding a compassionate and perhaps more culturally appropriate response.

Upon graduating from college, Welles chose a career with the State Department. He achieved the highest score among those taking the State Department's entrance exam and quickly thereafter left for his first assignment in Tokyo. Ironically, it was during this time in East Asia that he decided to focus his efforts on Latin American affairs. When he returned to the United States in 1917 he requested a transfer to Western Hemisphere, where he was assigned to Buenos Aires, Argentina. At the time (and perhaps still today) most foreign service officers would consider an assignment in Latin America as an unofficial demotion; nevertheless, Welles believed otherwise and showed ambition learning about the local culture, studying Spanish, and excelling at his assigned duties.

Eventually Welles was forced out of the Foreign Service by President Calvin Coolidge after rumors of an affair between Welles and Rhode Island Senator Elbridge Gerry's wife worked their way around Washington. After both of their marriages were

destroyed, Welles and the former Mrs. Mathilde Gerry married and seemingly, confirmed the rumors. After losing his post, Welles wrote a two-volume history of the Dominican Republic, praising the new interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine as defending the hemisphere rather than a symbol for U.S. aggression. This stance however did not mean that Welles stood against intervention into Latin America. Instead, Welles realized that occasionally military force was necessary, when lives were in danger, the Panama Canal was threatened, or other potential emergencies.<sup>60</sup>

Welles and FDR were grew up in the same upper class social circles, but Welles first earned FDR's respect when they collaborated with former Under Secretary of State Norman Davis on the drafting of a *Foreign Affairs* article.<sup>61</sup> The entire purpose of the article was to respond to an attack made by Secretary Stimson against Wilsonian diplomacy in 1931, when presidential candidates were jockeying for position. Welles provided some regional expertise—helping to write the section on Latin America where he advocated stronger economic bonds and presented the issue of equality and intervention logically: "If the equality of the Latin American republics with the United States as sovereign and independent powers is recognized, interference in their domestic concerns should be avoided to the same extent which the United States would demand that they refrain from interference in its affairs."<sup>62</sup> Once Roosevelt secured the Democratic nomination, Welles became an active supporter and even attended the White House inaugural dinner with Mathilde. Not long after the formal dinner, Welles had the Roosevelts over to his mansion on Massachusetts Avenue. However, even

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<sup>60</sup> Sumner Welles, *Naboth's Vineyard; the Dominican Republic, 1844-1924*, 2 vols. (New York,: Payson & Clarke Ltd., 1928). Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: FDR, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (New York City, New York: Enigma Books, 2002).

<sup>61</sup> Norman Davis, "Wanted: A Consistent Latin American Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 9, no. 4 (1931): 547-67.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.; Gellman, *Secret Affairs: FDR, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles*.

before these formal gatherings Roosevelt had already decided that Welles would be his man for Latin American policy. Welles was given the task of summarizing the key issue for the Western Hemisphere, and he responded by stating that they “must be regarded as a keystone of our foreign policy.”<sup>63</sup> In addition, he suggested frequent consultations with himself, upgrading Latin American relations to show their importance, and reiterated his point about branding the Monroe Doctrine as hemispheric in nature.

This reliance on Welles in regards to specific Latin American policy would continue throughout most of Roosevelt’s presidency. Even in 1934, when Welles was in Cuba, FDR admitted in a letter that, “...I have been so taken up with the European situation that all I have been able to do in regard to Cuban affairs has been to read your dispatches and dismiss them from my mind for the very good reasons that you seemed to be getting the situation under control and to have the confidence of the people who count.”<sup>64</sup> The Cuban affair mentioned in this letter refers to the 1933 Cuban Revolution led by popular university professor Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín against strong-man dictator Gerardo Machado who refused to give up power after his term was over. Martín’s nationalist Provisionary Revolutionary Government wanted U.S. diplomatic recognition, but at the same time implemented popular reforms such as land reform and the abrogation of the Platt Amendment. The U.S. ultimately backed a conservative counterrevolutionary movement in 1934, led by mulatto military leader Fulgencio Batista.<sup>65</sup> While FDR’s reliance on Welles was clear, it was not absolute. During

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<sup>63</sup> Gellman, *Secret Affairs : Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles.*, p 68.

<sup>64</sup> Carr diary, Mar. 20, Box 5, and Oct. 9, 1933, Box 4 and Memorandum, 1933, Pearson Papers, F 155, 3 of 3, Cordell #2, as cited in Katharine Elizabeth Crane, *Mr. Carr of State; Forty-Seven Years in the Department of State* (New York, : St. Martin's Press, 1960). 311-14.

<sup>65</sup> For more on the Cuban Crisis and U.S.-Cuban relations see Jules R. Benjamin, *The United States & Cuba : Hegemony and Dependent Development, 1880-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); *The United*

Welles' Cuban ambassadorship and the diplomatic crisis, FDR rebuffed Welles's call for troops against the military *junta* and Martín. However, he did seriously consider granting Welles' recurring request for troops, which is quite telling given its implications against the Good Neighbor Policy, the fact that it would have broken the anti-interventionist promise from Buenos Aires, and the heavy opposition which stood against Welles on this decision. Welles was very much along against a consensus consisting of the American public, the press, Congress, Secretary of State Hull, and the entire executive cabinet. Ultimately, no troops were sent, but FDR did back Welles' policy of non-recognition by withholding it from Martín's Cuban regime. While the Cuban example reveals that Welles' power to shape Latin American policies was not limitless, it is obvious that even from the earliest point in FDR's presidency that Welles would be the central figure for the region. Looking at it from a broader foreign affairs perspective, the Cuban crisis was FDR's first bilateral conflict and Welles was the incident's most central figure—in fact, Welles had set a precedent by speaking directly with the president and circumventing his State Department superiors. While the history of FDR's relationship with Latin America sheds some light on the ideologies and causes behind ethnic diplomacy, it also reveals a dependence on subordinates, none greater than Welles.

Once Welles was promoted to Under-Secretary of State in 1937 his responsibilities grew well beyond simply Latin America; however, he did prefer to keep a close watch on his diplomatic "home turf." In order to balance his new duties he utilized

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*States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution : An Empire of Liberty in an Age of National Liberation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States : Ties of Singular Intimacy*, 3rd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003); *Cuba under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

Laurence Duggan, who was promoted three times by Welles, ultimately becoming chief of the Latin American division. The two shared a common background: New York City natives, elite boarding school and ivy league educated, and—most importantly—a similar commitment to improving inter-American relationships, proven by their extensive service records. The most telling sign that Duggan was an essential ally of Welles was the fact that Duggan assumed Welles' role when he was unavailable. As once historian wrote, "Duggan ultimately became Welles's alter ego.... If anyone knew what Welles was thinking, Duggan did."<sup>66</sup>

Welles' partiality towards Latin American was once again evident within FDR's State Department through his advocacy for increasing amounts of military and economic aid for Latin America beginning in 1940. During the Axis aggression in Africa, when FDR was again focused somewhat on Latin America, FDR was concerned that the Nazis would pursue Dutch and French holdings in the Caribbean or eventually South America. FDR and Hull agreed to a minimalist approach based on safeguarding U.S. military resources while Welles sought enough aid to actually make an impression among Latin American nations. While Welles had FDR's ear, this time he did not heed the suggestion from Welles.

While Welles shaped much of what the State Department did towards Latin America, Cordell Hull still wanted some control. As time went on, FDR relegated a physically deteriorating Hull to the sidelines in most affairs. In fact, in a conversation with Henry Morgenthau he stated that since Pearl Harbor Roosevelt had not consulted

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<sup>66</sup> Gellman, Gellman, *Secret Affairs : Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles*: 111.

him on important foreign policy issues.<sup>67</sup> Despite FDR's rebuff, Hull still attempted to oversee Latin American interests to the best of his ability. The best accounts of this relationship point out that Hull blamed Welles largely for his marginalization and what resulted was a bit of a power struggle. By fall of 1942, Secretary Hull was convinced that Welles was disloyal to the department and confided with other colleagues that he believed the rumors circulating around Washington that Welles was a homosexual.<sup>68</sup>

This mixing of the personal with the diplomatic was commonplace in the State Department during this squabble. One relevant example occurred in October of 1942. While Hull was away on vacation, Welles gave a speech in Boston which harshly criticized Chile and Argentina for not breaking off relations with the Axis powers. Upon Hull's return, he scolded Welles for taking this initiative without his prior approval and added the point that this could be viewed by Latin Americans as the department turning away from good neighborism and back towards imperialism. What's most interesting however is that this speech was also the breaking point for Hull on some homosexuality rumors floating around Welles; following the scolding he setup a secret meeting with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to pursue his dissatisfaction. At the meeting, Hoover revealed that the FBI had already formally investigated Welles, publishing a report. Eventually he obtained a copy, but as one historian termed it, he was "openly abusive of Welles's reputation" even before he had actually read the report.<sup>69</sup> After this episode, the relationship between the two men became even more strained. Welles kept busy advancing the Good Neighbor Policy in his own way and began to reveal his post-war

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<sup>67</sup> John Morton Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, 3 vols. (Boston,: Houghton Mifflin, 1959). Entry for July 9, 1943, Vol. 647.

<sup>68</sup> Gellman, *Secret Affairs: FDR, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles*.

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum by Hoover, Oct. 29, 1942, Sumner Welles Federal Bureau of Investigation O.C. File, Washington D.C., as cited in *ibid.*, p 308.



philosophy of a United States as a global power. However, Welles also felt as though smaller nations, especially those in Latin America, deserved to play a role in this imagined post-war world. In fact, even after he was out of office he criticized the Dumbarton Oaks Conference for leaving the smaller nations out. Hull on the other hand attempted to unseat his perceived disloyal subordinate without actually asking Roosevelt to fire him. This translated into a bureaucratic battle with which the sickly Hull was surprisingly active. Ironically, this period between late 1942-1943 was the most active point of ethnically motivated diplomacy. While each action has its own back story, it is fair to state that the competition for control of U.S. foreign policy aided their protracted policies attempting to curb U.S. racism. Hull and Welles both considered themselves champions of the Good Neighbor and responding (or preventing) racial unrest was one way in which each man could attain small victories without the others involvement. Generally speaking, Welles's record shows a more hands on approach to the racial concerns that crossed his desk, whereas Hull's reception is more inconsistent. Sometimes this resulted in confusion, as will be seen in future chapters, as Texas or California governors would get slightly different feedback depending on who was writing the letter. Essentially ethnic diplomacy was something which was largely influenced by two men who had the same surface level goals, mistrust for one another, and very different diplomatic strategies.

Eventually, in late 1943, Hull began to demand that every crucial department matter come to him rather than Welles. This was a difficult reality to create since Welles was considered by many to be FDR's point man for foreign policy, and by 1943 was responsible for more of the day-to-day leadership than Hull. As Hull lined up more and

more support against Welles the President's hand was ultimately forced. On August 15, Roosevelt and Hull met together and Hull demanded Welles' resignation. Welles was eventually called into the room and told his fate. Reportedly, Welles stood up, shook hands with Hull and left. The State Department's man with the best understanding of Latin America was no longer in a position of power.

According to Henry Stimson, the former Under Secretary haunted Hull well after his dismissal. Stimson claimed Hull spent "restless nights" concerning himself over rumors that Welles was running his own State Department from his private residence with Roosevelt's blessing. To make matters worse, Hull would simply not consider an idea once Welles had publicly stated it. At one point Welles suggested that an inter-American gathering take place to discuss the peace after the war. Potentially, this conference could have been a place for racial differences to be formally addressed; however, Hull immediately rejected the notion due to his personal distaste for Welles.<sup>70</sup>

In October of 1944 Hull's failing health finally caught up with him. He entered Bethesda Naval Hospital in October with a positive outlook; however, his recovery would ultimately take seven months. After close to a month of being absent from the State Department, Hull sent his letter of resignation to FDR citing his poor health. Hull wanted to be involved in the building of the postwar peace and even was called the "Father of the United Nations" by FDR; however, the reality is that this could not be further from the truth.<sup>71</sup> Hull, the last true leader of ethnic diplomacy was gone and with

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<sup>70</sup> Langley, *The Politics of Integrity: The Diaries of Henry L. Stimson, 1931-1945*.

<sup>71</sup> Gellman, *Secret Affairs: FDR, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles*.

FDR's death the following spring, the new State Department was left with creating the United Nations.

At the end of World War II a number of foreign policy changes occurred which shifted Latin America (once again) to the back burner. The United States had better access to European and Asian markets which sidelined Latin America once again in both economics and diplomacy. U.S.-Soviet relations become the highest priority, affecting the U.S. relationship with the rest of the world and bringing an end to the Good Neighbor Policy. In addition, Latin America's biggest champion in D.C., Sumner Welles, was out of power and two men who showed an inclination for a new way of dealing with Latin America, FDR and Hull, were removed by the failures of their own bodies. The contextual window which allowed for this instance of ethnic diplomacy towards Latin Americans to had closed; however, as Mary Dudziak reveals in *Cold War, Civil Rights*, ethnic diplomacy would continue to be a viable policy choice.

## Chapter 2: The United States Department of State and the Beginning of Ethnic Diplomacy

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Mr. Allen Grambling of El Paso, Texas made a racially sensitive comment at an inopportune time. Grambling was a member of the El Paso School Board and a President of El Paso's Chamber of Commerce; a man worthy of respect by American standards. His key moment of disgrace came at a school board meeting when arguing against a federally funded nursery school being placed in Southern El Paso. Unfortunately for Grambling, he



was less than tactful when he added a controversial coda to his statement, "...besides, the children in the nursery school probably would be 90 per cent [sic] Mexican."<sup>72</sup> While the comment itself is interesting, what makes the case peculiar is the unprecedented United States Department of State (hereafter U.S. State Department) interest that resulted from the incident. Grambling made his comments on May 25, 1942, during a window of time when the U.S. State Department was keenly interested in positive race relations among Americans of European heritage and Americans of Hispanic heritage. Had he made the comment a few years earlier, or even a few years later, the news likely would not have spread past the local level. Due to international circumstances of World War II, Grambling was caught in a period of diplomatically charged racial sensitivity well above the scope of the El Paso School board, or even El Paso itself.

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<sup>72</sup> Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State from William P. Blocker, American Consul General, May 26, 1942. RG 59 Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives.

Grambling was eventually forced to issue a public apology and resign from the school board under the watchful eye of the U.S. Government.

The case of Allen Grambling is just one example of the United States government's inconsistent policy toward domestic racial problems. Considering the long history of racial inequality in the United States, the government has been slow to act against racial prejudices and tends to avoid addressing them as they are often politically damaging—this has been especially true for whichever political party counted the former slave states as part of their constituency. Of course, a few notable exceptions come to mind; the United States Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights Movement. As this paper suggests, another important exception to the general rule of federal neglect occurred during World War II along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Between 1940 and 1942 the United States changed its policy regarding instances of racial prejudice against people of Latin American heritage. However, it was not simply a 180 degree reversal of policy; that is, the government did not switch from ignoring the problem to trying to end it at all costs. The U.S. State Department did not want to see polarizing court cases based on racial discrimination, the passing of controversial legislation, or even noisy newspaper articles; the priority was not to end racism, but to prevent racism from ending wartime cooperation between the United States and Mexico. The degree of involvement in the State Department's new policy was a three stage change which ultimately resulted in an unrefined policy designed to maintain and promote United States solidarity in the Western hemisphere during a large scale, international conflict: Ignorance and deferment between 1940 and Fall 1941; research and a changing international scene between Fall 1941 and early 1942; and a

widespread monitoring across the U.S.-Mexico border of racially charged incidents, a proactive push for inter-American solidarity, and damage control on any potentially volatile issues beginning in early 1942.

### **Simpler Times, Simpler Ethnic Solutions, 1940-41**

The Grambling incident as a stand-alone event is seemingly inconsequential; however, if taken into historical context with the State Department's actions it becomes quite remarkable. Approximately 22 months prior to the fateful El Paso School Board Meeting, a group of Mexican-Americans were denied access to a swimming pool and a theatre in the heavily Mexican-American populated Southern California town of Azusa. While historians have taught us that these types of occurrences were commonplace for people of color in the 1940s, this particular event became an international issue after it was reported to the Mexican Consulate in Los Angeles.<sup>73</sup> Don Francisco Castillo Nájera, the Mexican Ambassador to the United States, penned a letter to Secretary of State Cordell Hull complaining about the incident. His report described the,

...discrimination which apparently consists in forbidding the nationals of Mexico from using the two places on the same terms and conditions as the other inhabitants of the town. To the direct negotiations which our Consul undertook with the authorities of Azusa (sic), the Mayor of the said town, V.A. Owens, replied on August 31 of this year advising the Consulate that, in his opinion, the existence of such restrictions 'is the best way of handling the whole situation', an opinion with which, as Your Excellency perfectly understands, the consular officials, the nationals of Mexico and this Embassy cannot agree.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Two classic examples include: Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided : the Civil War of the 1960s*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).; Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> F. Castillo Nájera, Mexican Ambassador to the United States, to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, September 26, 1940. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

Nájera's letter was eloquent and firm; arguing that the problem was not just the racial discrimination, but how Owens failed to address the important issue of racism. Later on in the letter the ambassador mentions the mayor's official response: "young Mexicans overrun the park without giving the Americans an opportunity to enjoy the benches and other services."<sup>75</sup> Nájera seemingly took offense to this response and uses it as a transition point for his letter. While the first half is a description of past events, the second half is a call for the State Department to intervene. However, before calling for action, Nájera points out that "the Civil Code of the State of California, so it seems, expressly forbids the use of such discrimination, the victims thereof being given the right to apply to the Courts with a request for protection."<sup>76</sup> The implications behind this quote suggest that Nájera believes this could become a major incident; should those particular Mexican-Americans decide to take action—likely with assistance from civil rights organizations such as the League of United Latin America Citizens (LULAC) and the Coordinating Council for Los Angeles Youth (CCLAY)—they could do so in a very public manner. While the tone of the letter is extremely polite and formal, the words do contain a threat—to allow this problem to be settled in a high profile court case. Nájera, while diplomatic in his language, was unusually aggressive as a Latin American representative dealing with the United States; it is clear that he understood the sensitivity of U.S. officials who feared the wide dissemination of information of any social conflict. While this was likely a threat which the Mexican government was willing to exercise, he backpedaled from his position and offered another option. Nájera next argued that "it would not be advisable to handle this matter through legal channels, in

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



view of the unpleasant attention and publicity which it might receive and its effects on... good relations.”<sup>77</sup> Instead of using legal and more aggressive means, Nájera preferred that Hull deal with the specific discriminating parties and induce “them to collaborate in preventing it in the future.” Nájera’s suggestion to keep the matter between their diplomatic offices and settle the matter quickly and quietly suggests that it was in the best interest of Mexico, not just the United States, to prevent racism from destroying their relationship as World War II intensified in Europe and U.S. officials feared a German invasion of Great Britain.<sup>78</sup>

The political situation in Mexico caused a similar strategy towards racial policy to that of the United States—the Mexican Administration saw race relations as a single piece to a more important policy. Mexico was at a crossroads prior to the Second World War; some factions wanted economic prosperity through industrialization and cooperation with the United States of America, while others preferred a more independent route through drastic social reforms.<sup>79</sup> The racial affiliations of these groups tended to be divided among color lines. The poorer, often darker-skinned mestizos and Native Americans often sided with reform minded politicians; while lighter-skinned and wealthier Mexicans would opt for a closer cooperation with the industrialized world. When World War II began, Mexico was simply an observer. However, the war was a key opportunity for President Ávila Camacho—the new

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Francisco A. Rosales, *Chicano! : The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, 2nd rev. ed. (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1997).

<sup>78</sup> F. Castillo Nájera, Mexican Ambassador to the United States, to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, September 26, 1940. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>79</sup> The most blaring example is the Mexican oil crisis which represented the two political factions: One group, predominately organized by the upper class, was for continued economic cooperation with the United States, limited barriers to trade and a modernization theory concept of Mexico’s economic growth. The second group was for strict barriers to trade, less involvement from the United States, and more economic opportunities for the disproportional percentage of poor Mexicans. Meyer, *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942*.

President whom took office in December 1940.<sup>80</sup> Camacho advocated a close relationship with the United States to spur on economic reform in his own country and the war caused an overlapping between his political goals for the country, the United States goals for solidarity, and ethical righteousness against fascism.<sup>81</sup> Just from a brief and limited understanding of Mexican politics at the time, one can ascertain that it was also to the benefit of Camacho's administration to have the United States quickly address or at least suppress the continued discrimination in the Southwestern United States.

Hull responded to Nájera about a week later; however, it is clear that he did not ascribe the same importance to the matter as the Mexican Ambassador. The letter was no more than an acknowledgement that the Ambassador's letter had been received and a message back stating that he was "communicating with the Governor of California."<sup>82</sup> The last the State Department ever heard about the incident was ten days later, when Governor Culbert Olson responded that he was assigning Earl Warren, then Attorney General of the State of California, "to thoroughly investigate this matter and to take appropriate action against the parties and community involved should he find that they are violating provisions or Statutes of the State of California."<sup>83</sup> Essentially the State

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<sup>80</sup> Camacho's predecessor, Lázaro Cárdenas was an advocate of reform and is remembered fondly by many Mexicans for nationalizing Mexico's Oil and attempting to protect her young industries and other valuable resources.

<sup>81</sup> Monica A. Rankin, *¡México, La Patria! : Propaganda and Production during World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). The "economic reforms" Camacho advocated were for increased American investment in Mexico, the building up of infrastructure, and exploring economic aid programs offered by the United States including Lend-Lease—which Mexico would eventually qualify for and receive, albeit in a limited capacity. Lend Lease aid to Mexico was approximately \$36 million in period dollars.

<sup>82</sup> Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, to Ambassador Nájera, October 5, 1940. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>83</sup> Culbert Olson, Governor of California, to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, October 15, 1940, RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

Department was establishing a policy of federal government deferral to the individual states with regard to the sensitive issue of race.

Nájera's letter regarding the Azusa incident was not the only racially-based complaint the State Department received in late 1940; two other incidents, both occurring in Texas, received a similar response. The first incident was an attempt by LULAC to put international pressure on the United States "in an effort to stop this discrimination against this group of American Citizens."<sup>84</sup> LULAC chairman Ted Cazares targeted Concho Theatres, Inc. (a branch of R. & R. Theatres, Inc. centered in Dallas, Texas) in a hope that a boycott, in conjunction with outside diplomatic pressure, would convince the State Department to intervene. Cazares sent a letter to the Peruvian Embassy requesting them to contact the State Department and included a clipping from the *San Angelo Standard Times* as evidence. The article revealed the theatre's blunt discriminatory policy and to emphasize his point Cazares underlined the offending clause: "Today the cost (of building the theatre) already had moved past the \$40,000.00 mark and the seating capacity had been raised to 1,100, including 250 in the balcony where the colored and Latin American movie fans will be accommodated."<sup>85</sup> The State Department monitored LULAC's activity; however, no public or private actions were taken and the matter was simply reported to the Governor of Texas, W. Lee O'Daniel, for his discretion.

LULAC's appeal to Peru represents the organizations internal decision to collaborate with Latin American governments in an attempt to apply the Good Neighbor Policy at home. This close connection was mostly realized through Mexico as several

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<sup>84</sup> Copy of LULAC letter to The Peruvian Embassy, November 23, 1940. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

of LULAC's leaders had forged relationships with the Mexican consulate offices in Texas. In doing so, LULAC merged together what the State Department, and pretty much everyone else, viewed as two separate issues, the mistreatment of Mexican nationals and the mistreatment of Mexican-Americans. During the war LULAC had four major campaigns under this joint banner: First was a push for equality and an end to segregation in schools which was the continuation of a campaign that began in 1930, second was addressing the denial of service in public places, third was a directed attack on the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company town of New Gulf (discussed further in chapter six), and finally was their support for the Caucasian Equal Rights Bill of Texas.

LULAC's involvement in promoting civil rights, its alliance with Mexico, and its adoption of the Good Neighbor Policy rhetoric in 1942 had a significant impact on the direction of ethnic diplomacy. Initially, the federal government was suspicious of LULAC. The San Antonio office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) even conducted surveillance after some strong comments suggesting that hemispherical unity was harmed by racial discrimination. Over time however these concerns were assuaged, although it is a safe assumption that clean FBI reports probably helped. Washington officials in the State Department and the OCIAA by 1943 saw LULAC as a moderate civil rights organization—especially considering it emphasized Latin American whiteness as justification for challenging racial discrimination—and favored them as a participant in ethnic diplomacy. Not only did this provide a reasonable ally for the State

Department, but it also elevated LULAC to the primary Mexican civil rights organization.<sup>86</sup>

The second complaint originating in Texas was concerning restaurants in the predominately white town of Hamlin, Texas.<sup>87</sup> A few select businesses opted not to serve Mexican-Americans and eventually the news made its way to Ambassador Nájera. According to Nájera, his Embassy instructed the Mexican consulate in Dallas to courteously contact the Mayor, Joe Culbertson, to resolve the situation. However, after two separate attempts the consulate got no response from Culbertson's office and the discrimination in the restaurants continued. Nájera used a similar pattern to his September letter concerning the Azusa incident, again using the inability of local authorities to address the problem as a justification for State Department intervention.

The wording of Nájera's letter is quite telling:

The foregoing obliges me to write to Your Excellency, most respectfully requesting of you that the Federal Government interpose its great influence to the end that in the town of Hamlin, Jones County, in the State of Texas, it may be brought about that the humiliating differentiation of Mexicans may not be made, thereby providing that the Mexican colony in Hamlin shall not continue to suffer from this unjust situation.<sup>88</sup>

Once again Mexico requested that the State Department intervene against a local government in the name of racial equality, and once again the federal government passed it along to the corresponding state government. The text of Hull's letter to Governor O'Daniel is practically identical to the letter sent to Governor Olson of California a few months earlier and the other letter sent to O'Daniel regarding the

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<sup>86</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 96-124; Craig Allan Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy*, 1st ed., Fronteras series (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005).

<sup>87</sup> Hamlin, Texas is a small town located in north-central Texas and maintains a predominately white population even today.

<sup>88</sup> Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, from F. Castillo Nájera, Mexican Ambassador to the United States, December 20, 1940. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

LULAC appeal to Peru—there is no record of a reply from Governor O’Daniel in either circumstance beyond acknowledgment that the letters were received.<sup>89</sup> In 1940, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the State Department were consistently ignoring the racially centered complaints of Mexico and Mexican-Americans.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. State Department’s lack of a response to racism is the Southwestern United States failed to appease Mexico. Mexican consulate officers met in San Antonio on March 30, 1941 to discuss the consistently problematic issue across the U.S.-Mexico border. The timing of the meeting was not accidental, as the Texas State Legislature was debating H.B. No. 909, better known as the Equal Accommodations Bill. While the bill sounds quite progressive in name, it only defines public accommodation rights for Caucasians. The bill was the brainchild of a number of multi-racial anti-discrimination organizations (including LULAC) and aimed to redefine Latin Americas as white; thereby allowing Mexicans equal access to public places in Texas. The preamble openly states that the bill is “An ACT to assure full and equal accommodations, rights, and privileges to all persons of the Caucasian Race in all public places of business or amusement in Texas, repealing all laws in conflict herewith, and declaring an emergency.”<sup>90</sup> While the racial classification that the bill is based on is interesting; internationally speaking, the most revealing text from the bill is found at the end of the document. The purpose of the last section is quite mundane; the drafters added it in order to expedite the debate in an attempt to pass the bill quickly. However, the justification for the expedited process reveals a major motivation behind the document:

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<sup>89</sup> The acknowledgment of a response to the Hamlin, Texas incident was drafted and signed by O’Daniel’s secretary and was only two sentences long.

<sup>90</sup> Copy of H.B. No. 909. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

The fact that the National Defense requires greater unity of interests between the peoples of North and South America and that at present there is no law in Texas which guarantees equal accommodations (sic), facilities, and privileges to the Nationals of certain republics in this hemisphere, [it] creates an emergency and an imperative public necessity that the Constitutional Rule....<sup>91</sup>

The bill may have been the creation of Mexican-American activists; but, it was also noteworthy for U.S.-Latin American relations. According to State Department records, the bill was largely heralded by Mexican newspapers as an example of United States progress combating their own racism—and therefore reinforced the Mexican government's agenda for closer relations with the United States. Unfortunately, it was also largely misunderstood and spun to appear more favorable than it actually was. They labeled it as a “fine step and have said [incorrectly] that it would apply to all Mexicans [including dark skinned Mestizos and Native Americans] although its wording does not so indicate.”<sup>92</sup> The gap between the reality in Texas and the Mexican newspapers understanding of the bill was problematic and did not reflect what the Mexican Consuls described as the “exacerbation of racial prejudices against individuals of Mexican nationality and their descendants” in the Southwestern portion of the United States.<sup>93</sup>

Therefore, the Mexican consuls' meeting in San Antonio resulted in a letter and an attached memorandum—a compiled list of discriminatory acts against Mexican and Mexican-Americans in Texas—with the hope that Texas legislators would change the wording of the bill to include all Americans, as the Mexican newspapers (and therefore most Mexican people) already believed to be true. The letter is careful to mention that

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Letter to Herbert S. Bursley, Assistant Chief of American Republics, from Charles Sumner, Chief of American Republics (Strictly Confidential), May 16, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>93</sup> Letter to Governor O'Daniel and Secretary Hull from the Mexican Embassy, May 6, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

the Mexican Government will not interfere with the Equal Accommodations Bill directly; however, it also states that

...it has no hesitation in confessing that the Government of Mexico and public opinion in the United Mexican States view with the greatest sympathy the efforts which are being made in Texas, with the purpose of putting into effect an anti-segregation law.... The Embassy of Mexico is sure that the Federal Government of the United States desire[s] to cooperate, in the most effective way possible, to do away completely with the humiliations, as unjust as they are cruel, which have been imposed for years on Mexican elements residing in various sections of the United States.<sup>94</sup>

The letter next argues that the Texas anti-segregation law should not be limited to Caucasians, citing recent changes in U.S. naturalization laws as a precedent—which allows for persons of indigenous races of the American continent to obtain American citizenship more easily. The Mexican government desperately hoped that the Texas bill would include both Mestizos and Native Americans alongside the word “Caucasian.”

The letter details the political outlook on the Texas situation in Mexico:

...the need for obtaining suitable legislation to prevent racial segregation against Mexicans and their descendants, thus destroying once and for all, one of the strong arguments which enemies of the policy of continental cooperation can use in Mexico, with great advantage, to incite public opinion as a conglomerate of people which, without any kind of reason, segregates our nationals residing therein and subjects them to humiliations which in some cases, amount to instances of denial of justice.<sup>95</sup>

The evidence that the Mexican Consuls in Texas collected is quite extensive and includes six pages of cases, including many instances where members of the Mexican Foreign Service were themselves the target of discrimination. For example, Chancellor Felix Gonzalez Monteon from the San Antonio Consulate “was expelled with his wife and children from the Bourquins Swimming Pool in the town of Castroville, Texas.” The memorandum also listed any failure from local government officials to respond to

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



complaints. In the Castroville instance, local civic organizations and the Mayor were informed, but no answer was received.

The response to the Mexican memorandum was consistent with the State Department's previous view on international race issues at this point in time. In a letter to Assistant Chief of American Republics Herbert S. Bursley, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles wrote that "there would seem to be nothing which the Department can do in regard to the Bill.... I think this angle of the Mexican memorandum should be ignored and an innocuous reply sent."<sup>96</sup> Welles also believed that the specific cases brought forth by the Mexican Embassy were pretty weak and that "it is doubtful that there has really been any increase in discrimination against Mexicans [and Mexican-Americans] in Texas. It seems more likely that with the Good Neighbor movement going strong the matter just seems more flagrant to the Mexicans at the present moment."<sup>97</sup> It was Welles opinion that "Mexicans have always been treated in Texas more or less as an inferior race and this cannot be remedied except by a gradual process of educating public opinion." He also suggested that a possible propaganda campaign could be effective; but dismissed both ideas, reiterating that ignoring the memorandum and allowing the individual states to handle the matter was the best course of action.<sup>98</sup>

The governors of both California and Texas (even though Texas was the primary target), given the recent segregation incidents, were contacted by the State Department regarding the Mexican Embassy's memorandum; their responses could not have been

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<sup>96</sup> Letter to Herbert S. Bursley, Assistant Chief of American Republics, from Charles Sumner, Chief of American Republics (Strictly Confidential), May 16, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

more different. Texan Governor O'Daniel acknowledged receiving the letters and promised that the instances outlined in the memorandum would be investigated; however, he would not be pursuing the investigation himself. He delegated the responsibility to the "only agency for making such investigations," the Department of Public Safety, under the leadership of Colonel Homer Garrison Jr., a former Texas Ranger.<sup>99</sup> In California, Governor Olson took a much more proactive approach. In his timely three page response, (O'Daniel's was less than one) Olson outlined a series of steps that he planed on taking to stamp out any isolated cases of discrimination—including public addresses, meetings with California mayors and county representatives, and perhaps most interesting was his plan to make a speech on Pan-American Day promoting racial unity between the peoples of America.<sup>100</sup> He ended his response by stating his belief that, "Generally speaking, I can safely say that there does not exist any sentiment of racial prejudice against the Mexican population of California..." Overall, the push for federal intervention against racial inequality seemed

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<sup>99</sup> The Texas Rangers, or Texas Ranger Division, is a statewide law enforcement agency that has served in a variety of different capacities similar to many other states' State Troopers. This includes riot police, criminal investigators, protecting the governor, and serving as a paramilitary force in times of crisis. Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, from W. Lee O'Daniel, Governor of Texas, April 28, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>100</sup> A copy of his speech would later be sent to the State Department and became a positive example for other public officials who wished to promote racial unity. Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, from Culbert L. Olson, Governor of California, April 11, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

Pan-American Day is the unofficial holiday instituted in 1930 by the governing board of the Pan-American Union. The Union's official resolution stated that the holiday "should be established as a commemorative symbol of the sovereignty of the American nations and the voluntary union of all in one continental community...." In addition, the President of the United States was called upon by the resolution to promote: "...the schools, civic associations, and people of the United States generally to observe the Day with appropriate ceremonies, thereby giving expression to the spirit of continental solidarity and to the sentiments of cordiality and friendly feeling which the Government and people of the United States entertain toward the peoples and Governments of the other republics of the American Continent." Organization of American States, "Minutes of the Permanent Council - Protocolary Sessions to Commemorate the Pan American Day," (Washington D.C.: Columbus Memorial Library, 2001).

to be an act of futility; the Equal Accommodations Bill was immediately defeated and the State Department remained unresponsive.

The next nudge towards federal intervention was in fall of 1941, where a small group of Texans became quite vocal against discriminatory practices. The renewed interest from the State Department began when San Antonio Mayor, C. K. Quin, introduced a measure to the city council calling for the revocation of all relevant licenses to any establishment that made racial distinctions. In the preamble to his ordinance he wrote, “that this country desires the friendship of all the Latin American nations in view of the fact that the Western Hemisphere may be of tremendous influence in guaranteeing and maintaining the peace of the world.”<sup>101</sup> In addition to Quin, *La Prensa*—the primary Spanish newspaper of San Antonio—published a series of editorials by Eduardo Idar, a prominent lawyer and political activist, with the heading, “The Oppression of the Mexicans in Texas.”<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, Idar’s comments were not a blanketed criticism of racial injustices, but rather a condemnation of prejudices specifically targeting Americans of German ancestry. At one point Idar states that young Mexicans who experience discrimination should seek out cities or “environments that are not the communities dominated by Germans and where a greater spirit of tolerance exists.”<sup>103</sup> In a different article, “Ancestral Passion of a Race,” Idar came out even more strongly against the Germans. Idar argued that Germans were a racially proud people with shrewd business skills; however, these skills were used by Germans for malicious purposes. He believed that a German was only interested in accumulating

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<sup>101</sup> Memorandum on Racial Discrimination Items in *La Prensa* of San Antonio, Texas (Strictly Confidential), October 22, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>102</sup> Idar, Eduardo, “The Oppression of the Mexicans in Texas.” *La Prensa*. October 16-18, 1941.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

wealth and was “ever active in intrigues to overthrow the governments of the countries that have given him a home and opportunities.”<sup>104</sup> To this end, if Idar was to be believed, Germans in Texas were the ones responsible for Mexican-American poverty levels and sought to keep them in a perpetual state of peonage.<sup>105</sup> The State Department interest was different this time around due to the public attention of the issue and the increased tension of war. Considering the context, the increased concern seems natural; the United States was practically at war by October 1941, with “shoot on sight” orders in the North Atlantic and the establishment of America’s first peacetime military draft.

Following the public interest from San Antonio on November 22, 1941, just over one year after the very first discriminatory incident in Azusa was reported to the United States by the Mexican Ambassador, the State Department decided to commission an investigation of “racial discrimination against Mexicans in Texas.”<sup>106</sup> Sumner Welles selected, wrote instructions to, and personally met with the man to whom the task fell, Herbert Blocker, American Consul General from Ciudad Juárez. The survey was to be completely in secret, as Hull pointed out that “you should not divulge to any one that you are engaged in this survey.” The investigation was also quite extensive, requiring Blocker to travel to Dallas, Austin, Galveston, Corpus Christi, Brownsville, San Antonio,

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<sup>104</sup> This is the State Department paraphrasing of Ibar’s article, found in Memorandum on Racial Discrimination Items in *La Prensa* of San Antonio, Texas (Strictly Confidential), October 22, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>105</sup> Idar, “Oppression of the Mexicans in Texas.” *La Presnda*, October 16-18, 1941.

<sup>106</sup> This investigation was preceded by a much simpler “case study” of the question of racial discrimination performed a month earlier; essentially this was just a compilation of complaints received by the Department of State. Letter to Herbert S. Bursley, Laurence Duggan, and Sumner Welles from Cordell Hull, Secretary of State (Strictly Confidential), November 22, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

Del Rio, El Paso, and “Intermediate Points.”<sup>107</sup> Hull also specifically outlines the motivation for Blocker’s investigation:

Moreover, the Department receives complaints from time to time formulated by the Mexican Embassy, by Mexican Consular Officers and by private individuals regarding specific cases of alleged racial discrimination. Obviously even isolated cases tend to impair friendly relations between the United States and Mexico or other countries. Widespread acts of this character can be most prejudicial.

Blocker’s report was compiled over approximately four months and was quite extensive, giving a number of insights into the origins of this year-old problem for the Department of State. Blocker also kept a correspondence with updates from his travels—most of which would be copied into his final report. The first of these correspondences recorded different instances of racial prejudice (via second hand report) and also described the underlying themes of the discrimination. In his introduction Blocker pointed out that he believed this push against racial discrimination was premeditated by activists:

“Unquestionably, the Mexican Consular Officers operating with the LULACS and the League of Loyal Americans are taking advantage of the times to bring what they term ‘certain racial discriminations against their people, including American citizens of Mexican origin’ to the attention of the Department and the Rockefeller Cultural Relations Committee.”

The initial letter also investigated the claim that a disproportional amount of the discrimination stemmed from settlements with predominately Anglos of German ancestry. Upon interviewing Mexican General Council Jimenez, Blocker learned that the General Council considered New Braunfels, Wharton, Lockhart, Fredericksburg, Fort Worth, and Houston to be the offending German communities; however, upon visiting the areas himself, he “found very little discrimination in any of the towns...and

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<sup>107</sup> Letter to William P. Blocker, American Consul General Ciudad Juárez, from Cordell Hull, Secretary of State (Strictly Confidential), November 25, 1941. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

such occurrences as were listed had in most cases been remedied.”<sup>108</sup> Blocker’s findings concerning the falsity of the German myth—the supposed propensity for German-Americans to be antagonistic to Mexican-Americans—and belief that LULAC and other organizations were “taking advantage of the times” are quite telling. He felt that the United States Good Neighbor Policy and preparation for war gave Mexico, and these interest groups, an angle in which to push their anti-discrimination agenda. In fact, later on in the letter he clarifies this point,

...I am inclined to believe from the investigations made so far that the LULACS, the League of Loyal Americans and the Mexican Consuls are a little bit too touchy on the subject and are inclined to search out instances and make molehills into mountains. It appears to me that there has to be some missionary work done on both sides.<sup>109</sup>

While Blocker was touring Texas and investigating the diplomatic importance of racism, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 transformed U.S. foreign policy. While the State Department knew that relations with Japan were deteriorating over the past few years, the Pearl Harbor attack caused a major concern for continental security—the Japanese proved that they were capable and willing to attack United States soil, and now there were no substantial defenses between them and the Western Hemisphere’s West coast. To make matters even more concerning, a German submarine sunk the *City of Atlanta*, a U.S. Freighter, killing 44 people and attacked two other ships off the coast of North Carolina just six weeks after Pearl Harbor. The United States could no longer afford to ignore potential threats to American solidarity.

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<sup>108</sup> Letter to Herbert S. Bursley from Herbert S. Blocker, Consulate General Ciudad Juárez, Report on Racial Discrimination in Texas, January 23, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

## **Signs of a Shift in U.S. Policy, 1941-1942**

While the Good Neighbor Policy had been in effect for years, the United States, post-Pearl Harbor, needed positive relations with Latin America more than ever before. In order to do so the United States opted to call a meeting, with the hopes of establishing a united, hemispheric front against the Japanese and German threats. A mere three days after Pearl Harbor, December 10, 1941, the United States began diplomatic action to address these concerns; they sent a circular telegram to all other American Republics calling for the Third Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics to convene at Rio de Janeiro in the first week of January.<sup>110</sup> Nineteen of the twenty nations invited immediately agreed to the conference in Rio on or before December 15, 1941—Bolivia being the only nation to not respond immediately.<sup>111</sup> In addition, Mexico and the other Central American Republics, most of which could be convincingly classified as being virtual U.S. protectorates, either officially broke relations with the Axis powers or declared war on them well before the conference began.<sup>112</sup> The South American nations, with the exception of Colombia and

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<sup>110</sup> Interestingly enough the meeting was already agreed upon in principle at the Second Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics held in Habana. The location for the third meeting was agreed upon at the Habana to be Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. By making this request the United States was simply calling for the group to convene at their proposed date in January, not constructing an unprecedented meeting of their own whim. "Circular Telegram to All Diplomatic Missions in the Other American Republics," (Strictly Confidential), December 10, 1941. RG 43, General Records: Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, Rio de Janeiro, 1942, National Archive.

<sup>111</sup> Bolivia would eventually accept the offer and participate fully in the conference. A possible, yet vague explanation for the delay is due to the extreme factionalism affecting the Peñaranda government in the 1940s; more research is needed into the U.S.-Bolivian relationship during World War II to clarify this point. For more information on this topic see Kenneth Duane Lehman, *Bolivia and the United States : A Limited Partnership*, The United States and the Americas (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

<sup>112</sup> Many works make this case, for a good overview see Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the eagle : Latin America, the United States, and the world*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

El Salvador made no declaration of war nor broke ties with the Axis powers; however, they also did not wish to break relations with any of the other American republics.<sup>113</sup>

On the surface, the Latin American response to the Rio meeting appears to be a direct sign that the Western Hemisphere was united and willing to follow the diplomatic lead of the United States; however, the meeting was much more complicated and involved careful negotiations between parties. The U.S. agenda for the meeting was well planned and specific; the primary goal was to pass what would become “Resolution I” in the final act, an official severance of relations with Germany, Italy, and Japan.”<sup>114</sup> At first the U.S. hoped to get a Universal Declaration of War, and among the Caribbean nations this was a real possibility; the Dominican Republic actually informed the United States ahead of time stating that they intended on submitting such a proposal at Rio de Janeiro. However, after correspondences with a number of countries, including Mexico and the majority of the South American countries, the U.S. realized that a unilateral declaration of war would not pass at Rio and opted for a more realistic goal—the severance of relations. At the conference itself, the United States did not even have to submit the proposal. Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia all submitted similar resolutions. Other key resolutions were introduced by the Caribbean nations as well: For example, Cuba proposed eight resolutions concerning Inter-American economic cooperation, the Dominican Republic proposed equal access to key raw materials based on need, Haiti suggested Pan-American cooperation in defense of the continent,

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<sup>113</sup> Report: “Status of the Other American Republics in Relation to the War as of January 15, 1942,” June 7, 1944. RG 43, General Records: Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, Rio de Janeiro, 1942, National Archive.

<sup>114</sup> “List of Tentative Projects to be Submitted by or Supported by the United States Delegation,” June 7, 1942. RG 43, General Records: Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, Rio de Janeiro, 1942, National Archive.



and Mexico recommended four resolutions around the concept of economic solidarity—further proving what their priorities were during the war. The U.S. did submit other secondary proposals, all of which corresponded with strengthening security in the Western Hemisphere and stretching the reach of U.S. influence into Latin America in the name of cooperation. These proposals included a resolution addressing a unified front against subversive activities, resolutions ensuring aviation rights and telecommunication between member nations, the improvement of health and sanitary conditions in vital industry locations, and guaranteed access for the Red Cross. The United States also called for an Inter-American Committee on Juridical and Post-War Problems.<sup>115</sup>

While the United States' primary and secondary resolutions were included in the Final Act, there were a number of additional resolutions that were not on the delegations' radar prior to the conference itself—undoubtedly some give-and-take occurred in getting the final draft signed. One example is Resolution XIV, "Commercial Facilities for the Inland Countries of the Americas." The resolution recommended that the American Republics,

...study promptly the possibility of concluding a multilateral convention binding themselves not to claim, by virtue of the most-favored-nation clause, concessions and facilities which each of them may grant or may have granted to the commerce of inland countries of the Americas in order to eliminate or minimize the disadvantages inherent in the geographical position of such countries.<sup>116</sup>

This resolution was in opposition of U.S. (and others) control of Bolivia and Paraguay and was not in the U.S.'s mindset of cooperation. In fact, the U.S. actually

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> "Final Act of the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics" January 28, 1942. RG 43, General Records: Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, Rio de Janeiro, 1942, National Archive.

officially submitted a “Reservation” to Resolution XIV—a tactic American Republics were allowed if they did not agree with (or were unsure of) a particular issue but still wanted to accept the Final Act as a whole.<sup>117</sup>

For the most part the Final Act was racially neutral, except for Resolution XX, “Reiteration of a Principle of American Law.” This resolution was first introduced at the Pan American Conference in Lima, Peru 1938; it primarily addressed the principle that legal aliens cannot claim the condition of minorities. However, in the 1942 version a new racially centered addition was made to the resolution, “In accordance with its historical, racial, political, and juridical tradition, there is and can be no room in America for the so-called racial, linguistic or religious ‘minorities.’”<sup>118</sup> The concept behind this new phraseology corresponds with the ideology behind the hemispheric solidarity movement, being that since all Western Hemisphere peoples were “Americans,” there should not be any separation or inequality based on racial, linguistic or religious basis. In essence, it argued against inequality without specifically stating that it was against inequality—an eloquent political tiptoeing around a sensitive issue.<sup>119</sup> Overall, the Rio Conference reveals that the United States was willing to appease Latin America, at

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<sup>117</sup> “Letter from Dr. Warren Kelchner, Secretary General of the Delegation of the United States of America to the Third Meeting of Consultation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, to Senhor J. de P. Rodrigues Alves, Secretary General of the Meeting” January 27, 1942. RG 43, General Records: Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, Rio de Janeiro, 1942, National Archive

<sup>118</sup> “Final Act of the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics” January 28, 1942. RG 43, General Records: Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, Rio de Janeiro, 1942, National Archive.

<sup>119</sup> Lic. D. Ezequiel Padilla, “Discurso del delegado de México Lic. D. Ezequiel Padilla,” *Comentarios y Documentos de La Guerra*, no. 49 (1942). The origin of the additional racially centered text of Resolution XX is unaccounted for in the archival sources consulted by the author concerning the Rio Conference; however, a speech from the conference made by Ezequiel Padilla, Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs, does contain similar statements to those found in the resolution. It is also a safe assumption to state that this resolution was not proposed by the United States, as the American archive clearly defines the full American agenda for the meeting and this does not include Resolution XX.

least to a certain extent that included acknowledging racial issues, once United States security and wartime production depended on cooperation.

### **Ethnic Diplomacy, 1942**

In the months following the Rio Conference, the United States took a much more proactive role against racial prejudice, nearly matching the Mexican government's desire to get redress from the U.S. government in response to the incidents. Spurring this activity was the submission of Herbert Blocker's report on February 27, 1942. Blocker detailed the history of the Mexican population in Texas and pointed out that most Mexican-Americans living in the state were of "the peon class in whom Indian blood predominates."<sup>120</sup> However, with the advent of international highways came an increased number of Mexicans from the higher intellectual classes, something which upset the precarious socio-economic racial hierarchy in Texas. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Blocker's report was the belief that Mexican-American interest organizations, specifically LULAC and the League of Loyal Americans, had teamed up with Mexico on account of blood ties to fight discrimination. The report concluded that due to the increased American involvement in a global war, these groups were "duly taking advantage of the desire of the United States to promote the most friendly relations between Latin America and this country," furthermore, he posited that "the Mexican Consuls and the local Mexican organizations are somewhat touchy on the subject and are inclined to search out instances with a view of making mole hills into

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<sup>120</sup> Herbert Blocker, "Results of a Confidential Survey of the Racial Discrimination Against Mexican and Latin American Citizens in Texas and New Mexico" February 27, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

*Figure 1: Herbert Blocker's other recommendations, 2/27/1942*

#2 – “The Convincing of State law enforcement officers of the necessity during these times of world war that friendliness and courtesy to Latin American national and citizens of that blood will bring untold benefits to our national Government in dealing with Latin American governments.”

#3 – “Use of such officers as propagandists among rural communities and towns....”

#4 – “The use of luncheon clubs, such as Rotary, Lions, and Kiwanis, which are popular in Texas....”

#5 – “The encouragement of mayors of cities where Mexican and other Latin American consular officers are located to publicly entertain them occasionally.”

#6 – “The selection of American consular officers at border posts who are proficient in the Spanish language and who have been coached in the promotion of good neighbor work.”

#7 – “That governors of border states, namely, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, be encouraged to invite Mexican border governors to outstanding celebrations in their states and to be present themselves.”

#8 – “That border consular officers be allotted a confidential fund by the Coordinator of Cultural Relations to be used in entertaining Mexican and American authorities several times in the year, thus bringing them together in a spirit over the banquet table.” (see FN106)

mountains.”<sup>121</sup> Blocker’s understanding of the situation was that the Good Neighbor Policy was being used against the United States by these groups in order “to force special recognition of social privileges.”<sup>122</sup> The LULAC’s and Mexican Consuls’ goal was to get one of two desired results. Ideally, they preferred the enactment of laws clearly outlawing discriminatory practices; however, if that was unattainable, the Consul General made it clear that they would also accept the unanimous local level understanding that it would benefit everyone to coexist more peacefully—pursuing the noble, but near impossible goal of changing the way every single Texan thought about race. While this second goal was arguable less attainable than the first, small victories, such as a local mayor speaking publically against discrimination to a favorable news article condemning unequal public accommodations served as anecdotal evidence for progress towards this broader goal.

Blocker’s analysis of racial tensions in Texas revealed his sympathetic mindset to the Hispanic-

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

American cause and included specific recommendations which parallel the non-legal solutions suggested by LULAC and the Mexican Consuls. The first recommendation Blocker made was a multicultural curriculum for rural Texans, implementing Latin American history and culture courses at every level of study—from elementary schools to universities. The courses were to address all Latin American nations, but “particularly Mexico, emphasizing the accomplishments of these people in literature, the arts, music, and sciences.”<sup>123</sup> In addition, Blocker believed that radio addresses and public events featuring sympathetic community leaders should be organized to supplement the education more visible in the public sphere. The most interesting aspect of this recommendation was Blocker’s suggestion that the money should come from the Coordinator of Cultural Relations, in order to prevent “undue publicity.”<sup>124</sup> Blocker’s focus on education and secrecy corresponds with the absence of any recommendations for legal action. The leadership in Washington, all the way down the hierarchy to Blocker, understood that publicity concerning racial prejudices against a people of color was undesirable during a time of global war. Blocker’s other recommendations followed a similar, cultural approach to the race problem (see figure 1). Blocker’s study became the basis for a more proactive policy towards racism in the American Southwest. His recommendations, for the most part, were implemented in some way—ranging from an informal suggestion to directly funded programs. His flagship plan of utilizing education was suggested by Lawrence Duggan to U.S. Office of Education Commissioner J.W. Studebaker. Studebaker was “heartily in accord with the recommendations presented in Mr. Blocker’s report;” however, he felt that a Latin American friendly education was

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

already being implemented in the American Southwest, thanks in part to a generous “grant from the Coordinator of Inter-American Republics.”<sup>125</sup> Studebaker bragged that that Nelson Rockefeller’s organization (the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs or OCIAA) had already funded “22 demonstration centers in which historical and

**FIGURE 2:** Photos taken from Herbert Blocker’s formal gathering which brought together key residents of both Southern Texas and Monterrey, Mexico after funding and instructions were provided by Secretary of State Cordell Hull.



Photos courtesy of the *National Archives and Records Administration*.

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<sup>125</sup> Letter to John Ward Studebaker, Commissioner of U.S Office of Education, from Lawrence Duggan, Advisor on Political Relations, April 22, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive. Studebaker was referring to Rockefeller’s Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

cultural materials concerned with Latin American countries are introduced into regular school curriculums.”<sup>126</sup> While this was Blocker’s most important recommendation, the OCIAA’s prior involvement would deter much possibility for further action. Instead, the State Department focused primarily on funding “an intensified program of cordial association with Mexican officials and private citizens along the United States border.”<sup>127</sup> Essentially, the United States government decided to utilize its diplomats as goodwill missionaries for racial equality. After a bit of internal debate concerning the specific amounts and source of the funding, Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent out seven letters to the border region American Consuls in Nuevo Laredo, Ciudad Juarez, Nogales, Agua Prieta, Mexicali, Piedras Negras, and Tijuana. These letters gave each Consul less than two months to use the dedicated funds (with an understanding that it would serve as a supplement to the entertainment expenditures assumed to be taken from their generous income) and the instruction that these funds should be used “in such activities as will your judgment constitute a positive contribution in the mutual improvement of relations [between Americans and Mexicans].”<sup>128</sup> The Secretary also strongly suggested that half of the supplementary funds, which ranged from \$40-\$100, should be utilized to host an event in a public place with Mexican citizens as the guest of honor.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Letter to Bernard Gotlieb, Esquire, American Consul, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, from G. Howland Shaw, Assistant Secretary of State, on behalf of Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, May 7, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive. The phrasing in this letter was identical to a number of different American Consuls across the American Southwest.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> While \$40-\$100 does not seem like much funding by today’s standards, adjusted for inflation this amount would equal \$850-\$1500 in 2010. In addition, it was emphasized multiple times that this was only a supplementary payment to their present spending budget. Finally, one must also realize that American dollars benefited from a beneficial exchange rate in Mexico in 1942. Historical inflation calculations provided by HBrothers, "Dollartimes," H Brothers Inc, <http://www.dollartimes.com>.

The Consuls each utilized their funds and reported back successful results to Washington. Consul Stephen E. Aguirre of Mexicali was perhaps the most inventive, organizing the International Desert Cavalcade Parade in celebration of “I am an American Day,” a new holiday created by the American Congress in 1940.<sup>130</sup> In addition, Aguirre hosted a large party with over 250 prominent citizens from Mexico and the United States, and a small, yet similar, private gathering at his own home. Aguirre pointed out in his letter back to Washington that these events were both appropriate and necessary. He believes citizens of the nearby American City of Calexico, California did not realize “the significance of maintaining the closest of friendly relations with our neighbor,” in addition, Aguirre believes “there is still more to be desired but some progress has been made.”<sup>131</sup>

Despite the influence of Blocker’s research in a more proactive approach to preventing racial problems from interfering with diplomatic relations, the United States also shifted their policy in addressing incoming reports of racial discrimination. Instead of waiting for threatening letters from LULAC or Ambassador Nájera, Washington began to monitor acts of discrimination and collect reports from their consuls across the U.S.-Mexican border and government officials—at times seeing them through to a public apology and resignation as in the case of Allen Grambling. The first time the State Department shifted, from ignoring or dismissing serious complaints to attempting to quell even minor concerns over racism, was in response to a letter dated January 30,

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<sup>130</sup> “I Am an American Day” is the historical root for Citizenship Day (also called Constitution Day) and is celebrated on September 17<sup>th</sup>. However, back in the 1940s, I Am an American Day was initiated by Congress to be the third Sunday in May. See Appendix 1 for photos of these additional funds being used by Blocker in Monterrey, Mexico.

<sup>131</sup> Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, from Stephen E. Aguirre, American Consul, Mexicali, Mexico, (Strictly Confidential) May 16, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive; Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, from Stephen E. Aguirre, American Consul, Mexicali, Mexico, (Strictly Confidential) June 5, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive



1942 from Miss V. Dominguez of San Bernardino, California—a mere few days after the Rio de Janeiro conference concluded.<sup>132</sup> Miss Dominguez was concerned about a particular theatre in her hometown that would not admit persons of color, including Mexican-Americans. While this sort of general letter to the Secretary of State was not entirely uncommon, the State Department's response was unprecedented. George H. Winters, Assistant Chief of the Division of the American Republics, responded with a return letter to Miss Dominguez. The letter did not give Miss Dominguez any specific solution, nor did it likely appear to Miss Dominguez as anything beyond bureaucratic nonsense; but, the letter clearly reveals the United States government's new concern for prejudice against Mexican-Americans. Winters told Dominguez, "I can assure you that discriminatory practices are a matter of concern to this Department, which is deeply interested in the best possible relations between citizens and residents of the United States and those of other countries and of the other American Republics in particular."<sup>133</sup> Starting with Miss Dominguez, the United States government no longer deferred racial problems to the State level—racial prejudice against Mexican-Americans had become a federal concern.

While the Blocker's report was the first and probably most impactful research on the subject, the State Department, OCIAA, and FEPC all pursued more information. All three organizations agreed that they needed to explore "extending the Good Neighbor Policy" into the United States itself.<sup>134</sup> Through these studies, the State Department,

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<sup>132</sup> The State Departments response took close to a month; however, Miss Dominguez letter was recorded as being received on January 30, 1942.

<sup>133</sup> Letter to Miss V. Dominguez from George H. Winters, Assistant Chief, Division of the American Republics, February 28, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>134</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 73.

OCIAA, and FEPC hoped to assess the level of social tension in the American Southwest, confirm the presumed level of poverty, record instances of economic and social inequality, and further map out the geographic extent of discrimination. Ultimately, the collecting of this data was intended to allow the purveyors of ethnic diplomacy, in this case especially Sumner Welles and Nelson Rockefeller, to discern how this situation could impact the war and then speculate on the likelihood that the racial discrimination could erupt into racial violence, creating an insecure border.<sup>135</sup>

The first of these additional reports came from the Office of Facts and Figures, which was contacted specifically for this task. The Office of Facts and Figures chose southwestern historian and librarian for the New Mexico Military Institute, Paul Horgan, to conduct the report. Horgan's report was provocative and raised major concerns back in the State Department. He claimed that the U.S.-Mexican border was very vulnerable to German aggression and, while he did not provide any evidence, stated that the Germans were actively working to set the Mexican population against the United States. He even went so far as to suggest that the Germans were promising Mexico the return of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California "as the fruits of a successful alliance against the United States" just like they did back in 1917 with the Zimmerman note.<sup>136</sup> Horgan also explained that the Axis were using shortwave radio towers in Mexico to spread Axis propaganda across the southwest. The broadcasts made the case that the United States was anti-Catholic, anti-Mexican, and generally racist. Horgan recommended the immediate creation of an "Americanization" campaign directed

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<sup>135</sup> Lawrence Duggan, advisor on political relations, to Sumner Welles, Undersecretary of State, December 31, 1941, RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>136</sup> Paul Horgan, "United States Latins in the Southwest, A Domestic Wartime Responsibility with Foreign Overtones," January 1942, U.S. Office of the Corrdinator of Inter-American Affairs. Department of State. Record Group 229. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

toward Mexican-Americans to counteract the Axis propaganda, but also suggested that the campaign target the broader American public to improve the general view of Mexicans. He believed the campaign should emphasize “American” qualities that Mexicans-Americans and Anglos had in common, especially their wartime cooperation efforts. Finally, Horgan suggested that the State Department, OCIAA, and FEPC work with Mexican civil rights groups—especially LULAC—in the campaign.

A month after the Horgan report, the OCIAA commissioned its own independent study by hiring out David J. Saposs. Saposs, a labor economist by trade, traveled to Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Illinois to study discrimination and its impact on U.S. wartime policies. Overall, Saposs’s conclusions were much more detailed and better researched than Horgan. He wrote that Mexican-Americans were “probably the most submerged and destitute minority in the United States.” He believed that discrimination was the leading cause behind the low wages, poor school attendance, illiteracy, unemployment, chronic illness, migratory work, juvenile delinquency, and substandard housing among the Mexican-American population. The report continued to point out that Mexican-Americans experienced the harshest discrimination of any American minorities in public places and that this was not an isolated phenomenon; in general, he said Anglos everywhere he visited treated Mexican-Americans as “inferiors.” After summarizing the extend and troubling racism in the American southwest, he analyzed the connection between this discrimination and U.S. relations with Mexico. He suggested that discrimination indeed jeopardized hemispherical solidarity and that racial unrest, which he believed was likely without some form of intervention, would disrupt wartime industries and hurt the war effort.

Shortly after submitting his report, Saposs changed from spectator of racism to participant in ethnic diplomacy as he accepted the position as director of the OCIAA's Minorities Section (discussed at length in chapter five).<sup>137</sup>

The last report was submitted to the FEPC and was written by southwestern author Vincenzo Petruzzo. Petruzzo interviewed a number of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans and determined that they were generally frustrated with the racial prejudice. He also agreed with the conclusions of the earlier reports that the discrimination was a threat to U.S. security and U.S.-Mexican relations and greatly hindered the Good Neighbor Policy. Similarly to Saposs, Petruzzo stated that the discrimination against Mexicans and Mexican-Americans "is [often times] greater than that practiced against Negroes." He also addressed the Nazi threat, seeing it as a major component of the problem. He could not prove the connection, but in his choice of words it is clear that he believed the connection existed. He stated that the unrest "cannot yet be definitely labeled as the penetration of foreign political movements." Petruzzo also reported that the unrest in the Southwest was being pushed along by Mexican right-wing political groups such as Sinarquistas and the Acción Nacional. Finally, Petruzzo, like the previous investigators before him, suggested working with LULAC to address the problems.<sup>138</sup>

Over the span of four months, four different investigations of racial prejudice in the American southwest were commissioned, conducted, and submitted to the State

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<sup>137</sup> David J. Saposs, "Report on Rapid Survey of Resident Latin American Problems and Recommended Program," April 3, 1942, U.S. Fair Employment Practices Committee. RG 228. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 73-74; *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Vincenzo Petruzzo, "Report on the Spanish-Speaking Peoples in the Southwest," field survey, March 14-April 7, 1942. U.S. Fair Employment Practices Committee. RG 228. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. *ibid.*, 75.

Department, OCIAA, Office of Facts and Figure and FEPC. They all agreed that discrimination against Mexican-Americans was a major problem for U.S.-Mexican relations and represented a direct threat to the U.S. ability to make war. These reports not only gave the State Department the data it needed to justify the start of ethnic diplomacy, it represented four separate, but shared, reports from four different U.S. federal agencies calling for immediate action. Ethnic diplomacy was officially in existence and it would come from several government agencies.

Pan-American Day, April 14, 1942, was an ideal opportunity for the United States government to generate positive media coverage for U.S.-Mexico relations along the border. The Junior Chamber of Commerce of El Paso presented a luncheon at the Hotel Cortez as part of Pan-American Day—a prime example of the State Department partnering with local civic organizations as suggested in Blocker's report. The holiday, both in general and in El Paso, in 1942 was designed to promote strong U.S.-Mexican relations. In this spirit, the Junior Chamber of Commerce asked the local ranking Mexican official, Vice-Consul Elias Urrea, to speak at the luncheon and American State Department Vice-Consul Sabin J. Dalferes to attend as a distinguished guest. Given the recent Rio Conference, growing economic partnerships forged to combat Axis fascism, and the United States new policy to directly address racial issues in the Southwest United States, one would expect the relationship to be at an all-time high and the luncheon to go smoothly. However, Urrea had a secondary agenda; one which American Consul General Blocker assumed was passed on "upon instructions from their [Mexico's] Foreign Office."<sup>139</sup> Urrea spent a considerable amount of time detailing

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<sup>139</sup> Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, from William P. Blocker, American Consul General, Ciudad Juarez (Strictly Confidential) April 15, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive. It should be noted that

specific cases of discrimination that came across his desk when he was the Mexican Consulate General at Houston, Texas. In addition, Urrea also called for “the man on the street to do his bit and suggested that the members of the Junior Chamber of Commerce might very well undertake to begin, where official efforts [in ending racism] had not as yet been successful....”<sup>140</sup> While the Mexican government was careful to utilize the highest level of communication before Pearl Harbor and the Rio de Janeiro Conference; afterwards, such as at El Paso, it seemed to Herbert Blocker that “they [Mexico] are, undoubtedly, taking every opportunity to bring this question before the American public.”<sup>141</sup>

While the sheer number of racially sensitive instances that the State Department was tracking after the Rio de Janeiro meeting is impossible to adequately represent within these pages, one particular case stands out as having higher stakes than the others. Senator Dennis Chavez of New Mexico, the first person of Hispanic origin to ever be elected to a full six year term, was quite active combating prejudice and reported some disturbing news to Cordell Hull on April 30, 1942. Chavez had been using his own political weight to fight racism; however, a few specific cases had become outside his realm of control and he decided to copy Hull on a letter he sent to Mr. Waterbury, Personnel Director for Consolidated Aircraft Corporation in San Diego, California.<sup>142</sup> The first issue that Chavez addressed directly related to the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation, a major manufacturer of aircraft and an important contributor to

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Consul General Blocker was not in attendance at the Junior Chamber of Commerce Meeting of El Paso; however, the events of the meeting were reported to him by Mr. Dalferes.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> The Consolidated Aircraft Corporation is well known for contributing the PBY Catalina and the B-24 Liberator during World War II.

U.S. wartime production. According to Chavez, Mrs. Peggy Clayton of Consolidated had refused to hire three Mexican-American women who sought employment at the company. According to Chavez's source, the three women were highly qualified and competent; however the women were turned down "just because their names happen to be Lopez, Castillo, and Delgado."<sup>143</sup> Chavez pointed out that this sort of activity is against the spirit of the Good Neighbor Policy and is damaging to the U.S. relationship with Latin America. Near the end of the letter, Chavez suggestively reminded Waterbury that his senatorial duties include positions on the Committee on Appropriations and the Sub-Committee on Appropriations for Military Affairs—perhaps the two most important committees for disseminating military contracts. While this letter already describes an extremely volatile issue, Chavez reveals Germany as an active player pushing for a negative U.S.-Latin America relationship. Chavez gave a radio broadcast from Washington D.C. in Spanish under the auspices of the OIAA to 130 stations south of the U.S. border. Chavez "tried to tell those people of our noble ideals and traditions and the fact that this certainly is the land of opportunity."<sup>144</sup> The problem arose when Germany answered Chavez's talk with a short-wave broadcast from Berlin in Spanish, completely denying Chavez's assertions and pointing to the unfair treatment received by Americans of Spanish decent throughout the Southwest. Chavez concludes, "Isolated cases...are what give the Germans and our enemies the opportunity of talking about the meanness of the Americans with those of Spanish

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<sup>143</sup> Letter to Mr. Waterbury, Personnel Director of Consolidated Aircraft Corporation, San Diego, California, from Dennis Chavez, U.S. Senator from New Mexico. April 30, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

ancestry.”<sup>145</sup> The State Department went into a small panic after hearing of the German broadcast and potential labor issues. This letter got the undivided attention of Cordell Hull, Sumner Welles, and Lawrence Duggan. In addition, the incident prompted a correspondence to Nelson Rockefeller, whose people had already been investigating Mexican-American labor problems. Sumner Welles requested Rockefeller look into the matter and let them know if there were “possible steps that might be taken to correct what appears to be a very bad condition.”<sup>146</sup> While no clear connection is ever drawn, this instance occurred the week before the final decision was made to give supplementary funds to the consulates.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Mr. Allen Grambling of El Paso was racially prejudiced at an inopportune time—his incident occurred on May 26, 1942, well after the policy had changed and following a number of other unfortunate racial incidents including the 1942 Pan-American Day luncheon in El Paso and the broadcasting of Nazi propaganda to Mexico. After Grambling justified his stance against the building of a new nursery school at the school board meeting by arguing that “the children in the nursery school probably would be 90 per cent [sic] Mexican,” a flurry of newspaper articles appeared in *The El Paso Times*. This caught the attention of William Blocker, who reported to Cordell Hull as the events progressed, Blocker followed the events for the following week and even met with Grambling for a formal conversation.<sup>147</sup> On May 31, 1942 Grambling bowed to mounting LULAC pressure and

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid. For more on Dennis Chavez see Joe Roy Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1987).

<sup>146</sup> Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, from Sumner Welles, Chief of American Republics. May 16, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive.

<sup>147</sup> Letter to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, from William Blocker, Consul General, Ciudad Juarez. June 1, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archive. Interestingly enough, the day after the insensitive comment Grambling went on a “business trip” to Washington D.C. Blocker’s letters reveal that the State Department knew of



apologized for his “slip of the tongue.” His statement included a nod to U.S.-Mexican relations,

...I should avail myself of this opportunity to publically express my friendship for and admiration of the Spanish-American people of our sister Republic to the South, who will soon be standing side by side with us in the war which threatens the freedom of all people of this hemisphere.<sup>148</sup>

The State Department’s monitoring of the Grambling incident and the direct involvement of William Blocker represents a noticeable change in policy and serves as an appropriate bookend to the three stages of a shifting policy. Whereas, in past years this would have been ignored or passed on to the corresponding state government—if it was actually reported in the first place—in the time of active war (and before Mexico had officially declared war) this case was worthy of multiple American diplomats’ time. Negative press and racially charged politics was not a means to U.S. solidarity in the Western Hemisphere, which was a primary concern of all Americans in the time of international war.

### **So What? The Implications of Ethnic Diplomacy**

The peculiar interest of the U.S. State Department into the affairs of Mexican-Americans is an intriguing historical case; however, it also raises larger questions regarding the willingness of the U.S. government to respond to racism and the implications from only limited results. It is clear that the United States government made a concerted effort to give redress to victims of racism while promoting racial

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his whereabouts during the trip, but there is no evidence that the department made contact with Grambling while he was in Washington.

<sup>148</sup> Allen Grambling, "Grambling Gives Reply to Criticisms," *The El Paso Times*, May 31 1942.

harmony during the war period. Many of these efforts included attempts which overlapped with practical strategies to end racism entirely, such as education programs, public apologies, and celebrating diversity at large social events. On the other hand, the opportunistic timing of the policy and the dogmatic avoidance of national attention to the issue reveals that the State Department was only willing to step against racism when it aligned a dire foreign policy goal.<sup>149</sup> While it seems logical that the State Department would only intervene when racism was relevant to foreign policy; the timing needs to be scrutinized. Why did the United States wait until after Pearl Harbor and the Rio de Janeiro conference, when the Good Neighbor Policy had been the official policy for a number of years? The answer discerned from this case study shows that the United States would not move on such a domestically controversial issue as race until it was absolutely essential to have Mexico's support.

Because of this contracted effort at combating racism, it is important to note that Mexico was able to influence U.S. foreign policy during World War II to a certain extent. Typically, histories of U.S.-Latin America relations argue that the Latin American nations were subjected to the United States policy, not the other way around. In this sense, the case represented here reveals how race can serve as a means to wield international power in a non-traditional manner.

Another interesting aspect of this case study is the limited long-term results; this point is best understood with a comparison of Mary Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights*—which argues that Cold War politics and pressure from the international community were instrumental in the relative long-term successes of the Civil Rights Movement. In the

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<sup>149</sup> Further evidence of the State Departments intentions is revealed by the lack of action on behalf of African-Americans, Japanese-American rights, or even Chinese-Americans.

case of the ethnic diplomacy directed towards Mexico as described in this paper, there were no major legal victories, federal legislation, or national movements to end racism in the American Southwest. The differing international environments of the Cold War and World War II help explain the contrary long-term results. World War II did not offer an arena for underdeveloped nations to play two superpowers against each other. Instead, Mexico was attempting to get what concessions they could from their highly influential neighbor. In addition, Mexican President Camacho's desire to work closely with the United States and a lack of other viable economic partners affected the level of dedication to the issue. While the Cold War and World War II instances of ethnic diplomacy vary due to a variety of circumstances, the comparison offers a deeper methodology for hypothesizing how the United States government deals with race and what sort of circumstances need to exist for permanent legal changes to occur.

## Chapter 3: Ethnic Diplomacy and the State Government of Texas, 1939-1943

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Perhaps one of the most memorable sound bites from the 2008 presidential campaign came from comedian Tina Fey. Fey, in a much heralded move, returned to Saturday Night Live in order to play the satirical role of Republican Vice-Presidential nominee Sarah Palin. In one particular skit, roughly based off of a real interview, Fey was asked about her experience in foreign policy. Fey, in her best Alaskan accent retorted, "I can see Russia from my house!" The line resulted in outrageous laughter and became arguably the most memorable moment from the episode. While it was hilarious to the audience, it took a very real toll against Palin's credibility as a serious Vice-Presidential candidate as it made its way around the national media circuit. In reality, the comment was derived from a September 11, 2008 interview with ABC's Charlie Gibson. Palin's exact words were, "They're our next-door neighbors and you can actually see Russia from land here in Alaska, from an island in Alaska." Thanks to their similar appearance, many Americans assumed it was actually Palin on the video clip and immediately the quote began popping up around the internet as attributed to Palin herself. Interestingly, their similar appearance still confuses many Americans as evidenced by a Fox News blunder confusing the two as late as 2011.<sup>150</sup> To make matters worse for Palin, the quote appears to be attached more to her than Tina Fey in popular culture. One can even purchase a refrigerator magnet with a picture of Palin firing a gun and the quote "I can see Russia from my house!" plastered in bold letters.<sup>151</sup>

While Palin came under a great deal of criticism for her actual comment and Tina Fey made it infamous, she brought to light an interesting prospect: can a governor or state government create their own, help shape, or influence the national level of foreign

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<sup>150</sup> Dan Amira, "Tina Fey's Sarah Palin Impersonation Is Still Confusing Fox News," NyMag, [http://nymag.com/daily/intel/2011/06/tina\\_feys\\_sarah\\_palin\\_imperson.html](http://nymag.com/daily/intel/2011/06/tina_feys_sarah_palin_imperson.html).

<sup>151</sup> <http://www.amazon.com/Sarah-Palin-Russia-Refrigerator-Magnet/dp/B001IZI0G2>

policy when they are geographic neighbors with a foreign country? In terms of international relations motivated by race, the answer is a resounding yes.

While typically historians only look at the federal level of international relations, some scholars have identified non-traditional actors in foreign relations; one notable example is David P. Forsythe's *Human Rights in International Relations* which discusses the importance of non-governmental organizations and "soft-law" in terms of international diplomacy towards human rights issues. Under the rubric of ethnic diplomacy, there is another non-traditional actor in international policymaking: individual states. During World War II, the relationship between Texas and Mexico was different than the relationship between the United States and Mexico. The state leadership of Texas was an agent of international relations in two separate ways: First, as a major player in the U.S. Department of State's ethnic diplomacy strategic plan, and more interestingly, as a separate political entity removed from the rest of the United States due to Mexico's isolated punishment of Texas's racial discrimination.

The onset of ethnic diplomacy began at the federal level after Pearl Harbor; however, many of the intricacies of ethnic diplomacy often played out at the state level. Texas and California were constantly under scrutiny by the State Department—mainly Sumner Welles and Cordell Hull—and served as a major strain in the relations between the United States and Latin America. While typically historians only look at the federal level of international relations, there are instances where individual states step into a role of diplomacy.<sup>152</sup> In this case, since the primary goal was to combat racial

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<sup>152</sup> For one other example of how a state can influence foreign policy see the discussion on the Caroline Episode in John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code : the Laws of War in American History* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

prejudice, the State Department was forced to at least partially collaborate with state and local leaders in order to address specific racially charged incidents. These interactions operated as part of the larger policy shifts previously discussed for the State Department.

Overall, Texas was willing to cooperate with the State Department in an effort to combat racism, although the policy changes which occurred in order to do so came much more reluctantly. The first stage of Texan ethnic diplomacy correlates exactly with the first State Department phase and is exemplified by racially charged incidents occurring before Pearl Harbor. Governor W. "Pappy" Lee O'Daniel (and for a couple months Governor Coke Stevenson) largely ignored any racial matters that came their way, and at most only passed them off to some lower level of government. During this first phase, the State Department was also passing along the incidents to the appropriate governor's office; therefore, by deferment the federal government was ignoring these incidents as much as Texas. In essence, racial policy for people of Latin American decent prior to Pearl Harbor in Texas was being determined by local mayors, policemen, sheriffs, and judges. In early 1942, when the State Department began to show more concern for a better relationship with Mexico, Texas records show a reactionist response to Mexican complaints of discrimination which slowly began to correspond with the ethnic diplomacy stemming from Washington. Governor Stevenson finally began to respond when prodded by Cordell Hull and made marginal efforts to improve race relations when asked. At first Stevenson still opted to pass along the incidents to local officials, but over time his office demanded accountability from those he passed responsibility to: including local level politicians, local law enforcement, and

the Texas Rangers.<sup>153</sup> This slow shift continued until the spring of 1943, when Mexico's bracero labor ban against Texas became the main focus of Texan growers, which suddenly forced Texas to realize its status as a purveyor of their own foreign policy. By looking at Texas's interactions with both Mexico and the U.S. State Department between 1941 and 1943, it is possible to see how their role in racially motivated foreign policy went through three stages: Apathy without accountability up through early 1942, a gradual compliment to the State Department ideology until Mexico excluded them from bracero labor, and finally a period of attempting to appease Mexico once the poor diplomatic relationship was hurting the state in areas outside of discrimination.

### **Apathy without Accountability**

The first key figure for Texas's "apathy without accountability" in terms of ethnic diplomacy—or lack thereof—was Wilbert Lee O'Daniel. "Pappy," as most people knew him, took over the Texas Governor's office on January 17, 1939 after a successful career in the flour milling business.<sup>154</sup> O'Daniel's initial decisions established a policy of

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<sup>153</sup> The Texas Rangers, or Texas Ranger Division, is a statewide law enforcement agency that has served in a variety of different capacities similar to many other states' State Troopers. This includes riot police, criminal investigators, protecting the governor, and serving as a paramilitary force in times of crisis.

<sup>154</sup> Following a stint in Kansas City and New Orleans, O'Daniel moved to Fort Worth to become the manager of the Burrus Mill and Elevator Company. It was here that O'Daniel gained the attention of the Texas public through the company's radio show where he wrote poems, songs, and discussed religious topics. While the radio program's content was popular, it was his hiring of some unemployed musicians to play hillybilly music as the Light Crust Doughboys that really brought him attention—the group even kick-started the career of musician Bob Wills, the "King of Western Swing." While Wills began his career in music, O'Daniel used the fame to launch his political career and start his own flour company in 1935. His first foray was as the President of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce from 1933 to 1934. In 1938, lacking any real political experience, O'Daniel ran for governor from the urging of his loyal radio audience. With a largely religious platform, he won the Democratic primary—the most important election in an overwhelmingly one-party state—by promoting the Ten Commandments, motherly love, and patriotism. Economically, O'Daniel was in favor of increasing old-age pensions, social-security, tax cuts, and industrialization. Unfortunately, his idealism was quickly shattered after entering office. As a 1940 *Time* article termed it, "He believed that all Governors, State Legislators, Congressmen were great & good men, whose chief



non-responsiveness against Mexico's initial complaints to the State Department about racial prejudice. At this point it is important to note where this episode falls within the corresponding ethnic diplomacy policy timeline for the State Department. In 1939, neither Hull nor his department was interested in proactively combating racial prejudice in Texas themselves; instead, they were operating within the long-withstanding policy of transference of the issues/requests from Mexico to the state level. So, with this contextual knowledge, O'Daniel was serving as the decision-maker for all racial incidents with potential for international implications occurring in Texas.

O'Daniel's record on race is notoriously segregationist. He is remembered as someone who supported racist policies and endorsed prejudiced ideas. The most notable evidence for this view on O'Daniel comes from his record after his time as governor and U.S. Senator (1941 to 1948). He attempted to break back into the political scene via the Democratic primaries of 1956 and 1958 with strong anti-communist and anti-integration messages in an effort to win white supporters. In his most infamous remark he blamed racial violence on a communist plot, claiming that the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was a red conspiracy.

Surprisingly, O'Daniel's racism during his governorship was not as absolute as one might guess from his anti-integration ideas a few years later. At the end of 1940 a number of concerned citizens and a county judge petitioned O'Daniel to act against the Texas Poll Tax—a Jim Crow law leftover from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bringing this petition to O'Daniel was not unexpected. During the campaign O'Daniel publically

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concern was the public welfare. He also believed what he read in the papers.” His outsider status plagued his gubernatorial record as twelve of his fifty-seven vetoes were overridden—setting a record for the office. For more on W. Lee O'Daniel see Seth Shepard McKay, *W. Lee O'Daniel and Texas Politics, 1938-1942* (Lubbock,: Texas Technological College Research Funds, 1944).; Bill Crawford, *Please Pass the Biscuits, Pappy : Pictures of Governor W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

revealed that, in opposing the Poll Tax, he was in the minority of the Texas Democratic Party. One West Texas newspaper revealed that 74% of Texans supported the poll tax, 18% wanted to abolish it, and 8% wanted to keep the tax as a support for public schools—but would make allowances for those that could not afford the payment.<sup>155</sup> Once O'Daniel was in power however, his opinion seemed to shift constantly, supporting whatever politics seemed to be popular. His records show that he responded to citizens both for and against the poll tax in a sympathetic fashion, always customizing his return letter to side with that particular person's viewpoint.<sup>156</sup> O'Daniel ultimately bowed to the requests to end the Poll Tax, but only half-heartedly. He polled the Texas State Legislature to explore the issue, and unfortunately for the Texas poor, the legislators were unresponsive. The Poll Tax was upheld and O'Daniel's office was both unwilling and in reality incapable of altering the outcome.<sup>157</sup>

While O'Daniel's overall record on race is overwhelmingly disappointing, he did react to racial discrimination against Mexicans or Mexican-Americans when pressured by the State Department—albeit in a minimal manner. Perhaps the best example is O'Daniel's first interaction with Secretary Hull. After only two weeks in office, O'Daniel was forced to deal with a fragile situation left over from his predecessor, Governor James Allred. On July 6, 1938 controversy struck when Deputy Sheriff McKennon, working out of Fort Bend County, allegedly threatened the life of the Mexican Consul in Houston, Lewis L. Duplan. Cordell Hull contacted Governor James Allred on January

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<sup>155</sup> *San Angelo Weekly Standard*, December 29, 1938.

<sup>156</sup> Correspondence. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>157</sup> McKay, *W. Lee O'Daniel and Texas Politics*, 102. It is also important to note here that the Texas Governor had an extremely small staff in the 1940s. During Civil War Reconstruction, Texas and other southern states attempted to circumvent northern control by limiting the influence of the governor's office, one way to do this was shrinking the governor's staff. O'Daniel, with his outsider status and a small staff definitely followed this tradition to a certain extent.

5<sup>th</sup> via telegraph, showing concern about the issue after being prodded by the Mexican Ambassador. Allred had someone hastily investigate the episode before leaving office. Ultimately, Hull was unhappy with this investigation which was submitted on the night before Allred left office on January 17, 1939. Hull then contacted O'Daniel on the 25<sup>th</sup> via telegraph, asking him to make his own review of the Allred file and "take such further action as the facts may warrant," and to give Hull "assurances that every appropriate measure will be taken by the local authorities...."<sup>158</sup> Despite the strong language in the telegram, there was never any federal involvement in Texas.

O'Daniel's response, sent the next day, is quite revealing. In a single paragraph, O'Daniel acknowledged the telegram and stated that he would review the file as instructed. In addition, O'Daniel assured Hull that the Texas Rangers and the local authorities of Fort Bend County would protect the Consul and "every Mexican involved in the controversy."<sup>159</sup> While the five sentence response was the status quo for the time, it unfittingly ordered the same organization which employed the deputy responsible for the initial death threat to protect the Mexican Nationals in Houston.

O'Daniel failed to follow up—besides the initial telegram—with Hull concerning the investigation and therefore Hull never followed up sufficiently with Mexico. While both the Federal and State leadership of the United States were preoccupied with other matters, the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs at the time, Eduardo Hay, and his office was unwilling to let the near-murder of one of their Consuls go unaddressed. On May 30, the Mexican Ambassador in Washington contacted Hull again, asking him to

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<sup>158</sup> Telegram to Governor Wilbert Lee O'Daniel from Secretary of State Cordell Hull. January 25, 1939. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>159</sup> Letter to Secretary of State Cordell Hull from Governor Wilbert Lee O'Daniel. January 26, 1939. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

once again intervene. In April, Hull subsequently wrote O'Daniel to find out what became of his investigation.<sup>160</sup> Thanks to the internal correspondence of O'Daniel's administration, it is clear why O'Daniel never responded—he had handed off the assignment to his personal secretary, Reuben Williams.<sup>161</sup> O'Daniel ultimately reported back to Hull, again dismissing the issue as unworthy of his personal attention by referring Hull to the Department of Public Safety. For a Democratic Governor to not handle a specific request by the prominent Cordell Hull (twice!) and to ask him to contact one of O'Daniel's agencies for more information is a major slight and remarkably revealing. However, given the State Department's similar and consistent referral of racial problems to state governments it is perhaps expected.

In the midst of Mexico reopening the McKennon episode, Mexican Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Licenciado Ramon Beteta Quintana, decided to visit San Antonio for a short vacation. The visiting of a Mexican dignitary was not especially noteworthy to O'Daniel, who was notified ahead of time—as was protocol—by the State Department. The reality of the situation was that a number of prominent Mexicans often made their way into Texas. In fact, the Quintana visit was quite unassuming since he had studied at the University of Texas at Austin and still had contacts in the state capital. On April 7<sup>th</sup> he crossed into Texas at the Laredo border crossing and an unfortunate altercation occurred. He was attacked and beaten by what local news called a “highwayman” or bandit. Local law enforcement investigated, but no arrests were made nor were there any forms of apology or higher level investigations (formal or otherwise) coming from the state government of Texas. Also, given that the incident

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<sup>160</sup> April 8, 1939 Letter to W. Lee O'Daniel, Governor of Texas, from Cordell Hull, Secretary of State. 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

occurred in 1939, the State Department was not yet invested in ethnic diplomacy and left the near-death of the Mexican Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs to O'Daniel's administration. Texas's inaction in this case would prove to be politically regrettable. Quintana, already an established name in Mexican politics, went on to manage the 1946 campaign of Miguel Alemán Valdés (who succeeded Manuel Ávila Camacho) and became his Secretary of Finance. The very idea that the second highest level Mexican diplomat could be nearly beaten to death on Texan soil without so much as a flinch from the Texan Governor or federal government is telling of the state of ethnic diplomacy in April of 1939.

Ambassador Najera did more than simply send complaints to Cordell Hull, which the State Department then forwarded to the relevant state governors, concerning the mistreatment of Mexican officials; he also made official grievances over the general mistreatment of Mexican nationals. The previously discussed town of Hamlin, Texas (see chapter 2) was one location that earned special attention in late 1940. While the federal government decided to pass this off to Governor O'Daniel, we learn by looking at the state documents that at this point in the timeline the governor left incidents like this to the local authorities. The Mexican ambassador attempted to contact the mayor of Hamlin, Mr. Joe Culbertson, on two separate occasions; however, no one from the town ever responded. When O'Daniel received a copy of the ambassador's letter with a request from Hull to investigate it further, his secretary responded saying that they would indeed look into it. After an exhaustive search of O'Daniel's files there was no other mention of this incident.

Unfortunately, as O'Daniel's years passed as governor, the discriminatory climate against Mexican-Americans and Mexican nationals only continued. On March 1, 1941 Mr. Victor Iturbe, Chancellor of the Consulate of Mexico in Corpus Christi, was "struck and jailed" by a police officer named William Foerster.<sup>162</sup> Iturbe and two others had stopped for a Coca-Cola at High Hat, an open-air café on Staples Street, and intended to drink them in his automobile. At the time Coca-Cola's cost a nickel a piece, but when he asked for a bill the waitress stated that he owed thirty cents. The reasoning for charging them double was "...that the Mexican clientele was not desirable and that they did not wish to have them at their establishment."<sup>163</sup> Iturbe debated the bill with the waitress and the manager, offering to pay the amount if they provide him with a receipt. The one caveat was that the manager or waitress had to write the specific reason for the double charge—being Mexican—not just the amount of the bill.<sup>164</sup> This disagreement resulted in High Hat's manager calling the police. Eventually three policemen arrived and Iturbe identified himself as a diplomat. The manager relented and asked him to pay the fifteen cents and then leave the property. When Iturbe cited that it was the principle of discrimination against Mexicans that was his concern, not the amount, Officer Foerster rudely stated "that he did not wish to hear any explanation" and that "it made no difference to him what position he had." Instead he said he should pay the fifteen cents or get taken off to jail. Iturbe attempted to explain once again; but, as promised a moment before, this led Foerster to grab hold of Iturbe

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<sup>162</sup> Copy of letter from Mexican Ambassador to Mayor of Corpus Christi. Sent by Sec. Cordell Hull to Mayor O'Daniel. May, 1941. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> It was not uncommon in this region for Mexicans or Mexican-Americans to be labeled by whites as Spaniards due to their use of the Spanish language. In this case, the waitress initially labeled Iturbe and his company a Spaniard until Iturbe corrected her.

and thrust him into the scout car. He then changed course and pushed him toward the patrol wagon instead, delivering “a strong push and a blow on the nape of his neck” on the way into the car.<sup>165</sup> He was then taken immediately to jail and held until the city attorney deemed the entire ordeal a mistake by the police department. In the end, no permanent damage was done to Iturbe, the City of Corpus Christi suspended Officer Foerster for fifteen days, and he was ultimately fired.<sup>166</sup>

On the surface this example shows a positive resolution to a problem of racial discrimination, suggesting that perhaps O'Daniel and the State of Texas had become more apt in resolving these sorts of incidents. However, in reality neither the Governor's office nor the Public Safety Department were investigating or controlling the situation. The local city leaders in Corpus Christi were responsible for resolving the issue, not the state of Texas. In addition, word about the incident reached Governor O'Daniel via Sumner Welles, Acting Secretary at the time. In other words, O'Daniel learned about discrimination in his own state from the State Department. In the Mexican Ambassador's letter to Cordell Hull describing the entire episode, he ended with a very telling statement which, if taken in context, was also a backhanded compliment directed toward the State Department. For after years of asking different levels of United States government to intervene on behalf of race, it was the municipality of a border town that responded:

I have decided to inform Your Excellency of the above facts because while desiring that the Government of the United States be advised in each case of the conflicts occurring on the border from purely racial causes, I wish at the same

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<sup>165</sup> A scout car back in the early 1940s Texas would not have had grating separating the back seat from the front seat. A patrol wagon would have the grating, making for safer prisoner transport.

<sup>166</sup> Copy of letter from Mexican Ambassador to Mayor of Corpus Christi. Sent by Sec. Cordell Hull to Mayor O'Daniel. May, 1941. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

time to state to you my personal pleasure at the energetic and efficient manner in which the local authorities of Corpus Christi acted in this case, which is certainly the only way of bringing it about that incidents such as that involving Chancellor Iturbe should not be repeated in the future.<sup>167</sup>

The response to the mistreatment of Mexicans in Texas is just one way to understand the way that the U.S. State Department, Texas, and Mexico helped shaped policy. As the later phases of State Department policy demonstrate, a cultural approach promoting mutual understanding can be quite effective in generating goodwill among foreign nations. In this regard, Governor O'Daniel did not do himself or his state any favors. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1941—the tenth anniversary of Pan-American Day—Herbert Blocker helped organize the American and Mexican Consulates in order to hold a major celebration in San Antonio. Blocker and a woman's activist group known as the Pan American Round Table committee setup a "Round Table" meeting as the main event of the festivities and invited foreign dignitaries with the understanding that Governor O'Daniel would lead the U.S. delegation.<sup>168</sup> Mexico agreed to send three officials: Alfredo Chavez, Governor of neighboring Chihuahua, Gustavo P. Serrano, Mexican Boundary Commissioner and emissary of the Foreign Affairs Office, and General Jaime Quinonez.<sup>169</sup> Despite trying to ensure Governor O'Daniel's attendance months in advance, the committee was only able to get an answer out of the Governor's office five days before the event. The letter cordially stated that the governor would be unable to attend.

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<sup>167</sup> Letter from Mexican Ambassador to the United States Castillo Najera to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>168</sup> . The Pan American Round Table of Texas was a state-level nonprofit women's organization which aimed to "acquaint members with the language, geography, history, literature, arts, culture, and customs of the republics of the Western Hemisphere, with the objective to foster mutual understanding, knowledge, and friendship among the peoples of the Western Hemisphere." As defined by the Pan American Round Tables of Texas Records, 1919-2009, MS 151, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

<sup>169</sup> Letter to Governor O'Daniel from Consul Herbert Blocker. April 4, 1941. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.



While not attending the high profile Pan-American Day in San Antonio was a mistake, it was severely compounded by the Governor's decision to attend the 105th commemoration of the Battle of San Jacinto just days later. Instead of attending a holiday that would improve relations between Texas, Mexican-Americans, and Mexico just down the road in San Antonio, O'Daniel opted to attend an event near Houston celebrating the battle where Texas defeated Mexico. Not only was the battle a bad memory for Mexico, but many Mexicans viewed it as the first step towards the Mexican-American War and the loss of one-third of their territory. The Pan American Round Table Committee predicted that the scheduling of these two events would pose a problem for the governor and even warned him months in advance in a letter asking him to "Please bear in mind that as yet many of the Mexicans are resentful to the observance of the Fiesta held here each year, commemorating the Battle of San Jacinto, and they would not understand you coming for that and not coming for April 14<sup>th</sup>, Pan American Day."<sup>170</sup> Choosing which public events to attend as a political dignitary may seem inconsequential, but this particular choice equated to a public slap in the of Mexican-Americans and Mexico by the State of Texas. In foreign policy terms, Governor O'Daniel failed to act as a dutiful ambassador of goodwill, and instead he acted more like a governor, since attending the Battle of San Jacinto commemoration would likely win him more votes since Mexicans were not voters in Texas and many Mexican-Americans were still being shut out of the ballot box. Unfortunately for Texas and Governor O'Daniel, Mexico viewed Texas as a separate political entity from the United States, especially when it came to matters of racial inequality. O'Daniel did not

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<sup>170</sup> Letter to Governor O'Daniel from Florence Griswold, Director General of the Pan American Round Table. March 19, 1941. RG 2001/Governor W. Lee O'Daniel Papers, Texas State Archives.

put much thought into his state's relationship with their neighbor to the South. It is fair to summarize O'Daniel's governorship as a time when there were no proactive concerns by either the federal government or the state government of Texas in regards to the racial aspect of the diplomatic relationship between Mexico and the United States.

Eventually, O'Daniel took an open Senate seat, and the task of managing Texas's relationship with Mexico fell to Governor Coke R. Stevenson. Stevenson, initially, did not change much when he took over in August 7, 1941. His first experience handling a racially charged international incident occurred only a couple of months into his first term and concerned a dry dock in Galveston. Mr. Rafael Linares, a member of the Mexican Foreign Service, alleged that he was assaulted by "Policemen 118" (his badge number) with a blackjack on the wharves of the Todd Galveston Dry Dock, Inc. In addition, the policeman made "disparaging remarks" about Mexico and its Consular Service.<sup>171</sup> The Mexican Foreign Service first tried to remedy the problem by dealing directly with the Mayor of Galveston; however, by the end of the month nothing was resolved, and the issue was escalated to the Mexican Ambassador who reported the incident to Secretary Hull. Since the State Department was still passing off complete responsibility for these incidents to the state government, it was turned over to Governor Stevenson.<sup>172</sup>

The responsibility went full circle as Stevenson contacted the Mayor of Galveston, Brantly Harris, for information. After a brief correspondence Stevenson reported back to Hull that the "policemen" in question was actually a security guard for

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<sup>171</sup> Letter to Mayor Brantly Harris, Galveston Texas from A. Cano del Castillo, Consul of Mexico. October 11, 1941. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>172</sup> Correspondence. Folder: Hull, Cordell Secretary of State. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

the Galveston Wharves and had been discharged. In some ways, Stevenson handled the problem of a foreign diplomat being assaulted better than his predecessor: He promptly followed up with the State Department, and his office followed the incident's resolution rather than passing off the responsibility to the Public Safety Department. Unfortunately for Texas's standing with Mexico, Stevenson failed in the eyes of the Mexican Foreign Service. He was unaware of the situation until Cordell Hull informed his office, and despite the numerous copies of letters mailed back and forth, he ultimately did nothing more than back up the City of Galveston, which was the very municipality that caused Mexico to take this case to the federal government in the first place. In Mexico's letters to Mayor Harris it is clear that it was not satisfied with the conclusions made by the chairman, George Sealy, of the Galveston Wharves Company. These were the same conclusions that the local, state, and (and through deferment) federal government ultimately accepted. Sealy's version of the story put more of the blame on Linares, claiming that Linares first pushed the officer in the stomach and also asked him to disobey orders. He admitted that eventually the gateman indeed hit him with a flapjack, but only with an appropriate amount of force to detain Linares.<sup>173</sup>

Stevenson was also tested in these early months by the Monterrey, Mexico Chamber of Commerce, a notably influential group for the entire region's economy. The issue concerned the *Valley Evening Monitor*, a newspaper in the border town of McAllen, Texas. The article's subject matter was seemingly innocent; it was a story about a new flying school opening in nearby Mission, Texas. The problem arose when the author decided to include a company official's opinion on keeping payroll information

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

private. The article read: “Fearful of Mexican bandits who might come over here and hold up [steal] our payroll, E.D. Combs, official of the Hill and Combs Company, declined to divulge payroll figures.”<sup>174</sup> This off-the-cuff comment instantly created controversy as Mexicans and Mexican-Americans equally took offense to the fear of racially stereotyped “Mexican bandits.”

Monterrey’s relationship with McAllen was already a focal point for Texas-Mexican relations at this particular time. A few weeks prior to the Combs comment in the *Monitor* the Monterrey-Reynosa Highway was completed. The highway itself represented a cooperative effort between Texas and Mexico and was a major positive mark in an otherwise recently imbalanced ledger of the Texas-Mexico relationship. To commemorate the occasion, the governors of four neighboring Mexican states went to McAllen with a group of “outstanding citizens,” many of whom were part of the Monterrey Chamber of Commerce, to participate in a number of festivities. On the Texas side, Governor Stevenson opted not to attend, but instead sent Texas House Speaker and local icon Hon. Homer Leonard to represent the governor’s office.<sup>175</sup> During the ceremony, FDR’s Good Neighbor Policy was used by the Texas officials to identify the ideological foundations for the cooperation. The Monterrey Chamber of Commerce still had the words of the Texan leadership in mind when the E.D. Combs discriminatory remarks were found in the *Monitor* a couple of weeks later. One specific thing they recalled in their complaint was a Texan speaker, who they did not specifically identify and who supported “mutual understanding and comprehension between our two

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<sup>174</sup> *The Valley Evening Monitor*, October 1, 1941. McAllen, Texas.

<sup>175</sup> Leonard was actually voted McAllen’s Most Valuable Citizen a few months later in 1941.

countries and people.”<sup>176</sup> The duality of good-will rhetoric existing alongside racist comments in a newspaper was particularly difficult for the Monterrey group to accept. The rocky history between Texas, Mexico, and the United States, especially given their recent history, made this sort of rhetoric already a difficult notion for many Mexicans to believe in 1941. Therefore, when two weeks later the *Valley Evening Monitor* published racially prejudiced comments, the Monterrey Chamber of Commerce were not just disillusioned, but it affirmed their suspicions that Texas had not *really* changed just because of FDR and a new highway.<sup>177</sup>

Governor Stevenson’s reactions to the incident were not inappropriate and definitely succeeded in de-fusing racial tension in the short term. With urging from Hull, Stevenson responded apologetically to the Monterrey Chamber and attempted to explain away the newspaper comment as an exception rather than the rule of how Texans perceive Mexicans. The *Monitor* also apologized, although masterfully managed to do so without taking any blame themselves. The editor was adamant that their newspaper was not racist, but only reported what others believe. While Stevenson met the minimal expectations of the State Department at this time (pre-Pearl Harbor), overall he was inept in diplomatically dealing with Mexico’s racial concerns in his state.

The most revealing episode regarding the Texas state government and racial prejudice prior to Pearl Harbor was its reaction to a 1941 state bill concerning racial equality. Governor O’Daniel left office while this racially charged bill worked its way through the Texas legislative process for the first time. Activists from civil rights organizations, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the League of

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<sup>176</sup> Letter to *The Valley Evening Monitor*, McAllen, Texas from Enrique E. Trevino Garcia, Manager, Monterrey Chamber of Commerce. October 7, 1941. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

Loyal Americans (LLA), convinced Pagan Dickson, a state representative from San Antonio, to introduce House Bill 909 to the statehouse. Dickson's proposal was met with harsh resistance, or as the *San Antonio Light* termed it, "laughs, murmurs of disapproval and a few shouts of dissent."<sup>178</sup> The bill, which became known as the "Racial Equality Bill" stated: "All persons of the Caucasian Race within the jurisdiction of the State are entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of all public places of business or amusement."<sup>179</sup> The bill specifically did not include private establishments as places of racial equality, which raised concerns among Mexican diplomats who saw it as an incomplete solution.<sup>180</sup> The bill additionally outlined that a "Caucasian" who suffered from discrimination could sue for the actual damages plus one hundred dollars. It is important to note here that LULAC and the LLA were not trying to give equal public accommodations to all citizens; in fact, the terminology was chosen carefully in order to ensure that African-Americans would remain segregated and utilized whiteness as a civil claim for civil rights.

The most important, and interesting, aspect of House Bill 909 was the use of the word "Caucasian." The term brings up the question of which racial category the United States placed Mexican-Americans and any person from the vast array of Latin American heritages. LULAC and the LLA believed that "Caucasians" included all *mestizos* (mixed-race); however, other Texans believed otherwise and many others were simply confused. Over the next few years Governor Stevenson received a smattering of letters

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<sup>178</sup> *San Antonio Light*, April 15, 1941, transcription, attached to Blocker to Secretary of State, Feb. 27, 1942, decimal file 811.4016, State Department Records; Thomas A. Guglielmo, "A Transnational Struggle for Mexican Americans' Rights," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (2006): 1212-37. House Bill 909 File, Texas State Archives.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. House Bill 909 File, Texas State Archives.

<sup>180</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*.

from concerned citizens asking whether or not they were considered “Caucasian.” The writers ranged from Italian and Irish immigrants to Mexican-Americans with a variety of different backgrounds.<sup>181</sup> The simple existence of these letters reveals the complexity of the “Caucasian” classification to Texans, but also reinforces the subjectivity of the social construct of race itself.

By taking a look at the long legal history of Mexican-Americans, a greater understanding of their racial status in the 1940s is revealed. The first time the Mexican population in the United States was considered in its entirety by the United States is in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the Mexican-American War, where they were guaranteed citizenship without regard to any specific racial classification. As time went on there remained no legal distinction, so the racial identities of Mexican-Americans and other Latin American immigrants were simply formulated at the border. Border officials eventually fell into the practice of writing “Spanish Race” or “Mexican Race” on their official immigration papers. The lighter skinned individuals received the “Spanish” moniker and the darker skinned immigrants received the “Mexican” label. Even in the beginning, the pre-existing white majority in the United States had a difficult time placing people from Latin America in the non-white and white racially structured dichotomy found in the United States.<sup>182</sup>

In 1896, the issue of Mexican-American race finally made its way into a United States federal courtroom when Ricardo Rodriguez applied for naturalization in San

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<sup>181</sup> Correspondence. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>182</sup> Neil Foley, “Straddling the Color Line: The Legal Construction of Hispanic Identity in Texas,” in *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States*, ed. Nancy Foner and George Fredrickson (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 341-357.

Antonio, Texas. The lawyers that sought to deny him citizenship attempted to elicit testimony from Rodriguez labeling himself either “Spanish” (and therefore white) or “Indian.” In appearance, the court records state, “As to color he may be classed with the copper-colored or red men. He has dark eyes, straight black hair, and high cheek bones.” Rodriguez rebuffed every attempt by the lawyers to associate him within the white/non-white dichotomy; instead he simply argued that he was a “pure-blooded Mexican.” The trial became quite the spectacle when numerous local San Antonio politicians submitted amicus briefs attempting to scientifically prove that Rodriguez was of Native American ancestry based on his appearance and the authority of “scientific experts,” therefore suggesting he was ineligible for citizenship.<sup>183</sup> Despite an array of testimony against him, Ricardo Rodriguez earned his naturalization thanks to the fact that the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo did not specify citizenship requirements concerning race. The judge’s final decision concluded that Rodriguez was probably not white, but nor could he be excluded from citizenship. In other words, the court decided to treat Rodriguez as though he was Caucasian legally, while agreeing that he most definitely was not white.

This sort of uncertainty remained until 1935, when a federal judge ruled that three Mexican immigrants were ineligible for citizenship because they were not white. Mexico complained and Roosevelt decided to act. He circumvented the court decision by simply having all government agencies classify Hispanics as Caucasians. This was even reflected in the 1940 census, where the category “Mexican” was eliminated and “Mexican Decent” was included as Caucasian. This precedent of Caucasian until

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<sup>183</sup> Ariela J Gross, “The Caucasian Cloak: Mexican Americans and the Politics of Whiteness in the Twentieth-Century Southwest,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 95, no. 2 (2007): 337-92.



proven otherwise existed at the time House Bill 909 was introduced; therefore, people of Latin American heritage were included in the term "Caucasian" for equal rights within public accommodations. However, while the law may have been inclusive, the state legislature and the citizens of Texas, like the Texas court 45 years before, did not see Mexican-Americans or even Mexican nationals as truly white in everyday life.<sup>184</sup>

The activists behind the bill worked hard to rally support for their cause and they clearly understood the difficulty of getting this type of bill passed. Washington insider and LULAC member Alonso Perales attempted to get the State Department and the President behind the bill, while regionally based LULAC councils wrote their local Texas Congressmen. These activists did not stop with their own government. Other members contacted the Mexican press, the Mexican embassy, and even coordinated with racial activists in Mexico in order to apply foreign pressure. Their support in Mexico was ultimately impressive. The Mexican Embassy and several prominent Mexican newspapers pushed for the bill and attempted to influence the Texas legislature's decision by pressuring the State Department. As one scholar has noted:

*Novedades*, one of Mexico City's largest and most respected newspapers, opined: "The Bill presented before the Legislature of Texas ... constitutes a just compensation for the many indignities which our citizens residing in the southern part of the United States have sustained." *El Universal*, another large Mexico City newspaper, agreed in an April 23, 1941, editorial: "We salute the Texas legislators in the forward steps . . . which they have taken so that all obstacles may be eliminated from the road that leads to a true and mutually advantageous understanding."<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Patrick D. Lukens, *A Quiet Victory for Latino Rights: FDR and the Controversy Over "Whiteness"* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012).

<sup>185</sup> Guglielmo, "A Transnational Struggle for Mexican Americans' Rights," 1220.

On the northern side of the border, the letters written to Sumner Welles and FDR were less successful. In this way, the U.S. federal government was consistent in its policy towards racial prejudice prior to Pearl Harbor—it was up to Texas to decide. Despite the vast amount of effort behind the bill, it quickly died in the state legislature much to the chagrin of Mexico, groups like LULAC, and the hardworking civil-rights activists.

### **Gradual Alignment with the State Department**

Even though December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941 was a pivot point for several different histories within World War II, this was not the case for Governor Stevenson's stance on racial discrimination and Texas' relationship with Mexico. While the federal government began pushing ethnic diplomacy after Pearl Harbor, and even more strongly after the Rio de Janeiro Conference in January, the state of Texas was much slower to change its policies. A better description of this shift in policy would be a "slow climb" rather than a true change of course. Texas may have been slightly more diplomatic to Mexico under Stevenson than O'Daniel; however, he and other state leaders only committed the minimal amount of effort, and then only when prodded by the State Department and Latino-rights activists. Over the next year-and-a-half Stevenson's reactions to racial incidents become gradually more pronounced. Stevenson was dutiful in fulfilling the demands made on him, but he was not as quick to adjust his own policies as the State Department. Stevenson's own policy was a gradual and cautious alignment with Cordell Hull's ethnic diplomacy beginning after Mexico shut out Texas from the Bracero

Program, climaxing in his signing of House Concurrent Resolution 105, another attempt at an Equal Rights Bill in the Texas legislature. In all fairness to Stevenson, from his perspective the extra attention to racial issues was not emphasized as directly as it could have been.

In December of 1941, immediately following Pearl Harbor, the incongruence between Texas and federal policy was evident. Governor Stevenson was once again called upon by the State Department in response to a racially charged incident; however, this time Secretary Hull's tone had changed. They were not simply passing off responsibility for mistreatment of a Mexican Consul to the Governor; instead, Hull wanted Stevenson to investigate specific reports concerning *Mexican-American* segregation in Texas. At this stage ethnic diplomacy had not evolved into an on-the-ground policy, but only existed as an ideology. The State Department sought to be proactive on cultural goodwill while still deferring the problems to the state level. A new era had begun at the department, but it would take some time and the right opportunity for their pro-active cultural good-will to be translated into positive action in the American Southwest. In Hull's letter to Stevenson, the Secretary clearly explained his justification for why these types of investigations were necessary: "At this particular time, it is imperative that we try to maintain the most cordial relations with our neighbors below the Rio Grande."<sup>186</sup> No Texas governor had ever been asked to investigate discrimination against Mexican-Americans before and Stevenson was still relatively new to the job. Stevenson forwarded the first, post-Pearl Harbor assignment to the mayors of both Hamlin (which had a previous incident in 1940) and Knox City, the two places

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<sup>186</sup> Letter to Mayor J.L. Culbertson, Hamlin, Texas from Governor Coke Stevenson, Governor of Texas. December 16, 1941. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

mentioned specifically by Hull and the Mexican Ambassador. In other words, he handled the issue as he did previous incidents involving Mexican diplomats, making his stance on the plight of Mexican-Americans consistent with his dealing with prejudiced Mexican diplomats, deferment without accountability.

This approach, however, would not last. Over the next year-and-a-half Stevenson slowly aligned himself more and more with the State Department's ethnically motivated diplomacy. This change in policy was reactive in nature and failed to contain the proactive cultural goodwill found in federal government policy. From an organizational standpoint, Governor Stevenson's office began to file paperwork concerning racial discrimination in an intriguing new way. Prior to December 1942, the governor's office organized paperwork of this nature by general correspondence headings, such as "Secretary of State" or "Mexico." Under the new system, paperwork related to Mexican nationals, Mexican-Americans, or any other person of Latin American descent was classified as "Interracial Discrimination," while a separate file, "Racial Discrimination" kept all records pertaining to discrimination against African-Americans.<sup>187</sup> This simple organizational reclassification shows, at a minimum, a new way of looking at people from Latin America.

The first incident which occurred during the "interracial discrimination" period involved a roller rink in the border town of Harlingen, Texas, just a short drive north of Brownsville and Matamoros. The rink's owner had left town and his son, who was left in

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<sup>187</sup> One can further speculate what the "Interracial" category truly meant to those that created it. Technically speaking, "intra-racial" would be the more appropriate name for what the Texans and the OCIAA were describing, since it was supposed to concern affairs within the Caucasian race. Perhaps those responsible for filing the paperwork consciously (or subconsciously) still saw the groups as separate racial categories. We will likely never know exactly how this title was created originally, but it does provide insight into the understanding of race in 1940s Texas.

charge, had hung signs that read, “No Mexicans Allowed.” The governor’s office first heard of the problem via one of the usual entities, the Mexican government. On December 4, 1942 the Mexican Embassy in Washington, the State Department, and Governor Stevenson were simultaneously informed about the problem by the Brownsville Mexican Consul, Francisco Torres Pérez. Stevenson never responded. Twenty days later, Pérez wrote Stevenson again:

*Because the Mexican Embassy in Washington...is interested in knowing the steps taken by your office in order to correct the irregular situation in Harlingen so far as the Mexican nationals is concerned....I am taken (sic) the liberty to ask you to please inform me of your decision in this matter.*<sup>188</sup>

A newspaperman from the *Brownsville Herald* also decided to inform Governor Stevenson of the discriminatory signage on December 28, since there had been no state level response. It is important to emphasize that Stevenson was acting independently of any State Department request for action. While Hull’s office was made aware, instructions were never sent to Stevenson. Shortly after the second request, Stevenson had his assistant pen an order to the Mayor of Harlingen. The message was brief, but pointed, “...the Governor requests that you use your influence in having this sign removed.” The reasoning was also clearly stated, “...in order that it may not in any way strain the friendly relation between the United States and Mexico.”<sup>189</sup> While the roller rink signage would have been passed over by Austin just a year earlier, Texas and Coke Stevenson were beginning to fall in line. A complaint about one sign was now considered by the governor’s office as “interracial discrimination.”

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<sup>188</sup> Letter to Governor Coke Stevenson from Francisco Torres Pérez, Brownsville Mexican Consul. December 24, 1942. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

<sup>189</sup> Letter to Hugh Ramsey, Mayor of Harlingen, Texas, from Maurice E. Turner, Assistant to Governor Coke Stevenson. January, 4 1943. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

One of the interesting side effects of Governor Stevenson's action in Harlingen is that a few days after the incident was resolved other citizens in the region began to speak out in support of equality for people of Latin American ancestry. Most notable among them was County Judge Oscar C. Dancy of Brownsville. Dancy was familiar with the region and in a two-page letter to the governor provided a number of examples of bars and restaurants refusing service to Latin Americans or American citizens with a Hispanic appearance. He informed the governor that he "would not knowingly issue a permit (liquor license) where I know such discrimination is going to be." The Governor's assistant responded with an acknowledgement which included, "You know, of course, that it is the governor's policy to do everything within his power to further the Good Neighbor Policy instituted by Secretary Hull."<sup>190</sup>

### **Attempting to Appease Mexico?**

The most important factor for Texas aligning with Ethnic Diplomacy was the Bracero Program. Mexican officials and journalists had warned the United States that discrimination was an issue for years by the time the first bracero agreement was first being negotiated in February 1941. The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City learned that the Bracero Program hinged on the expansion of the Good Neighbor Policy and sent a "Suggested Method of Improving the Situation" to the OCIAA's Coordination Committee

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<sup>190</sup> Letter to Governor Coke Stevenson from Oscar C. Dancy, County Judge, Brownsville, Texas. January 12, 1943. RG 4-14/Governor Stevenson Papers, Texas State Archives.

in Mexico and the State Department back in Washington.<sup>191</sup> In this way, the U.S. Embassy contributed to the piling evidence, including the four reports discussed in the previous chapter, that ethnic diplomacy was needed. These early negotiations yielded no results. The two sides were unable to agree and negotiations stalled until June. Mexico's Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Jaime Torres Bodet, made the same argument. He stated that when Mexicans worked in the United States, due to discrimination in wages they were "worse [off economically] after they returned than before they went." He also alluded that Camacho's administration was taking a risk in making an agreement with the United States. Ultimately, the Mexican negotiators demanded that the United States address the discrimination.

Retrospectively, it is easy to see Mexico's growing discontentment with Texas in the negotiation of the Bracero Agreement. In July of 1942, Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard was sent to the Inter-American Conference on Agriculture in Mexico City, where he continued the negotiation over the Bracero Program with Mexican officials. Foreign Minister Padilla was still very reluctant due to recent exploitation and discrimination against Mexican-Americans and Mexican nationals in Texas. Despite this, thanks to the existence of ethnic diplomacy and the U.S. conceding on the discrimination stipulations, on August 4, 1942 the first Bracero Agreement was approved. This allowed about 4000 Mexican workers, mainly from large southern cities like Mexico City or Guadalajara, to work in the United States in any state but Texas. The braceros were not the only Mexicans working in the United States however,

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<sup>191</sup> Correspondence between Nelson Rockefeller, Coordinator of the OCIAA, to W.C. Longan, Executive Secretary, Coordination Committee for Mexico. .S. Office of the Corrdinator of Inter-American Affairs. Department of State. Record Group 229. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

thousands of illegal farm laborers, who eventually became known as “wetbacks” had poured across the border. This predicament and the logistics of organizing such a program led to subsequent agreements.<sup>192</sup>

The importance of race to Padilla is even more evident in the more highly publicized April 1943 Bracero Agreement. Under this second agreement about ten times more Mexicans joined the Bracero Program, putting the total at about 44,000 workers. Four general guidelines were created for the program: First, Mexican contract workers would not engage in any United States military service. Second, and most notably, Mexicans entering the United States under these provisions would not be subjected to discriminatory acts of any kind. Third, the workers would be guaranteed transportation, living expenses, and repatriation. Fourth, the Mexicans entering under these conditions would not be employed as replacements for domestic workers or in an effort to reduce domestic wages. Most importantly, Mexico made certain to specify that all bracero contracts were between the bracero and the United States government, not individual farmers. These contracts would then be supervised by the Mexican government. With this sort of organization, whenever a bracero expressed grievances, they could now direct them to the United States federal government, not to some local politician (or even governor) who might have power over a particular farmer.<sup>193</sup>

According to the Labor Statistics Bureau, the withholding of Mexican labor in Texas was a major problem for Texan farmers. In 1939, Texas employed 300,000 migratory laborers, almost all of whom were of “Mexican extraction.” The wartime

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<sup>192</sup> Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*; Barbara A. Driscoll, *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

<sup>193</sup> Richard B. Craig, *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy* (Austin,: University of Texas Press, 1971).



demand for labor and the draft reduced the number available to 150,000 by 1943. This meant that migratory laborers were in huge demand as the need for labor was only increasing alongside the rest of the United States economy. Housing, treatment, and wages for these workers were typically very poor; and in addition, as these laborers migrated to different parts of the state, their presence often set off racial disputes. This made for major problem for the governor's office. Not only were Mexican-American activists spreading the word about racial injustices, but Mexico was unwilling to allow braceros into the state.<sup>194</sup>

1943 had produced a bumper crop of cotton in Texas and farmers were constantly after the governor to find more laborers. A real fear developed when farmers pointed out that a potentially large portion of their crops would go un-harvested at a time when the government had given them higher quotas. Stevenson tried a number of different solutions, including utilizing prisoners of war, that is until it was reported to the Labor Department, but ultimately there was no substitute for Mexican migratory labor. In order to maximize Mexican labor, Stevenson needed Mexico on his side. In some ways, one could argue that Mexico coerced Texas into having an international mindset in regards to race. In the spring of 1943 Texas growers petitioned Stevenson, the U.S. State Department, and even Padilla himself in an effort to get Mexico to lift the ban. At this point Coke Stevenson sprang into action, consulting directly with State Department officials, the OCIAA, a district judge who represented growers in the cotton rich counties of Nueces and San Patricio, and perhaps most importantly, Padilla himself.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. The Texas Farm Bureau was central to this lobbying effort. The district judge was Cullen Briggs, who worked diligently for the cause. He represented the farmers and consulted with state and federal officials. Briggs

The new pressure from Texas growers resulted in a number of policies to improve race relations. On the surface things seem to have really changed for Texas between December 7, 1941 and May 6, 1943. Most notably, the Caucasian race bill was re-introduced, and this time successfully made its way through both houses and the governor but not as a law, but as an unbinding resolution on May 6th. The existence of a re-introduced bill is once again credited to the hard work of many key Mexican-American leaders and groups such as Alonso Perales, George I. Sánchez, M.C. Gonzales, Carlos Castañeda and the Committee on Inter-American Relations (an OCIAA funded organization). This time, in the midst of war and western solidarity, the bill was reframed as a wartime necessity to promote the administration's hemispheric solidarity plan. These non-traditional foreign relations voices once again used a foreign relations angle in 1943 rather than a humanitarian plea for racial equality and to an extent it worked even better than last time. Their strategy was to market the Equal Rights Bill as adhering to the Good Neighbor Policy. Again, similar to 1941, the Mexican embassy and the Mexican press also added momentum to the bill at the national level, contacting the State Department with the hope of increasing federal pressure. This time however, the State Department was receptive, and while unwilling to seriously mettle, they did pay special attention to the bill.

Thanks to this lobbying and a larger group of activists, the bill had a lot more momentum than the 1941 attempt. The initial progress was promising; the house bill, Bill 68, passed unanimously. Unfortunately, in the state senate, the comparable legislation, Bill 203, did not have the same success. Representative Ben Ramsey of

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contacted William Blocker, U.S. Consul General in Ciudad Juárez, and Tom Sutherland from the OCIAA for immediate assistance.

San Augustine questioned the definition of “Caucasian race,” and shrewdly moved the bill to his subcommittee for an investigation. Ultimately, Ramsey rejected it and never allowed it out of the State Affairs Committee.<sup>196</sup> Both houses offered an alternative after the bill died: a resolution, which holds no legal ramifications and was essentially meaningless, except to perhaps serve as a political barometer on the topic. In a heavily edited format, the Racial Equality Bill became House Concurrent Resolution 105, was quickly passed by both houses, and was signed by Governor Stevenson on May 6, 1943.

Interestingly, this resolution reveals an interesting limitation to ethnic diplomacy. The State Department supported action in terms of curbing Latin American racial discrimination, but aimed to do so without public controversy. Therefore, it was somewhat surprising that an OCIAA organization and the State Department both backed the bill since groundbreaking legal solutions were not something the State Department typically supported under the rubric of ethnic diplomacy. Ultimately getting a bill passed in Texas was worth the risk of a public backlash, although the bill was admittedly written to be minimally controversial, since the bracero ban had major economic implications for Texas. When the bill became a resolution and lost the fines, this became more acceptable to the State Department. One internal note to Sumner Welles and Laurence Duggan from Department Latin American specialist J.F. McGurk emphasized satisfaction that the bill lost its teeth in its final form.

There is probably disappointment in some quarters because of the removal of penalties from this legislation. Nevertheless, it is of some importance as a declaration of policy, and in its present form it no doubt stands more chance of

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<sup>196</sup> Guglielmo, "A Transnational Struggle for Mexican Americans' Rights." p 1222-1223.

being salutary than it would if aggravating sanctions were provided as an internal part thereof.<sup>197</sup>

Stevenson's insensitivity regarding the poor treatment of Mexican-Americans and Mexicans caught up with Texas with this ban. While the ban began with the first Bracero Agreement In the fall of 1942 , it was not until the spring of 1943 that the ban's significance was felt. This gap in time from when the ban started and when Texas seemed to care seems odd; in fact, the "Texas Ban" does not come up in the Governor's files at all until spring of 1943. However, this is easily explained by contextualizing international racial politics alongside the Texas agricultural calendar. The ban occurred in the midst of the 1942 harvest season, a grower's busiest time of year, and when labor was already secured. Once growers had more time to consider political issues and the spring planting season began, bracero labor was suddenly very important. Organized efforts to overturn the ban soon followed. The Texas Farm Bureau embodied this group of Texan growers who were pushing hard for the ban to end. Many thought that Resolution 105 could end the ban and appease Mexico's seemingly distaste for Texas. Instead, Mexico decided to reemphasize its ban against Texas.<sup>198</sup> In a June 17<sup>th</sup> memorandum Foreign Minister Padilla's reasoning was articulated by the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, George Messersmith.

[Padilla expressed] regret that this order had been issued which would not make possible the going of any Mexican workers under the agreement to Texas. He said, however, that they had these reports of increasing discrimination in Texas....he referred to a recent bill in the Texas Legislature which would have prevented such discriminations or imposed penalties in case thereof, and he said

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<sup>197</sup> Letter to Sumner Welles and Laurence Duggan from J.F. McGurk. RG 59 Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives.

<sup>198</sup> Historiographically speaking, the timeline of the "Texas Ban" has been confused. Guglielmo's *Fighting for Caucasian Rights* argues that the "Texas Ban" began in June 1943 as a direct diplomatic response to the Equal Rights Resolution; however, in reality it began in Fall 1942. The 1943 document he is referencing is simply a restating that nothing is changing after the resolution.

that the failure of the Legislature to pass the bill has created a bad impression here [Mexico]. He understood that the Legislature had contented itself with a mere resolution which was ineffective.<sup>199</sup>

In another note to a State Department official, Messersmith clarified the significance of Texas's exclusion:

*To my mind the Mexican government has seized upon the issue with which the State of Texas is very much concerned in order to try and get something done about discrimination. I think Dr. Padilla feels that if anything is ever to be accomplished with regard to discrimination it must be done during the war when our needs from Mexico are so great and so urgent.*<sup>200</sup>

Had Stevenson responded to the initial banning in 1942, the argument could be made that Stevenson was conscious of his state's relationship with Mexico and as his role as a player in international relations. Instead, he responded only when Texas growers pressured him to find a solution and Concurrent Resolution 105 only made matters worse. After passing the Resolution, Stevenson wrote Padilla with help from George Messersmith, Ambassador to Mexico. They emphasized Texas's commitment to the Good Neighbor Program and asked for a lift on the bracero ban. Padilla was not receptive. He was critical of 105 being only a resolution, the lack of substantial fines and punishments, and the Caucasian wording.<sup>201</sup> Despite the failure of the resolution, at this moment that Governor Stevenson had clearly become proactive in his state's racial problems with Mexico and started on a path that perhaps even surpassed the ethnic diplomacy stemming from Washington. The period of slowly and reluctantly aligning his state with the ethnic diplomacy foreign policy of the State Department was over.

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<sup>199</sup> George S. Messersmith. Memo June 17, 1943. 811.504. Guglielmo, "A Transnational Struggle for Mexican Americans' Rights." p 1224.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Letter from Stevenson to Padilla, June 25, 1943. Stevenson Papers; "Remarks Made by Licenciado Ezequial Padilla, Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Press on Wednesday Evening, August 11, 1943. Stevenson Papers. Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 80-81. Zamora states that is unclear whether Stevenson or Messersmith penned the June 25 letter to Padilla.

After a lack of progress, Stevenson attempted to repair the ill-will stemming from the poorly received Caucasian Equal Rights Resolution by once again taking action. On June 25<sup>th</sup> he made the “Good Neighbor Policy Declaration” stating FDR’s foreign policy to be the “public policy of Texas” and tried to reinforce House Concurrent Resolution No. 105 by directing all Texans to abide by it. In July he directly addressed all law-enforcement in Texas “to be especially vigilant in order to prevent discriminations against Mexicans.”

Stevenson again tried reasoning with Dr. Padilla directly in a July 12, 1943 letter, in what is arguably his first attempt at conducting diplomacy directly by himself. In the seven page letter (see Appendix 1 for full text) he began by admitting that he had only recently learned of the Texas bracero ban. This being the case, the purpose of the letter is obvious, Stevenson tried to convince Padilla to remove the ban. While he states this multiple times throughout the letter it is most directly stated in the closing paragraph where Stevenson declared his “desire further to assure Your Excellency (Padilla) that the people of this State will await with the highest interest the decision of the Mexican Government which I hope will permit Mexican workers to come to Texas in order to work on our farms, where they are so desperately needed.” Stevenson uses a number of different themes to implore Padilla to reverse his decision. The first point is that the racism problem is being fixed. The Governor argued that “every effort is being made to wipe out discrimination as may exist...” and that all Mexican residents and Mexican nationals were “entitled to full protection under its laws.” He pointed out a number of specifics such as Concurrent Resolution 105, his proclamation to have all law enforcement crackdown on racial discrimination, and a handful of recent goodwill events

backed by the OIAA. Unfortunately, his lack of understanding of Mexico's position is clear when he included his own history of handling incidents of racial discrimination as further proof:

In this connection, I am pleased to advise Your Excellency that not only my Office but all branches of the State and Municipal governments in Texas are on the alert to ameliorate any misunderstandings that may arise or may have arisen through so-called class or race distinction. I am glad to say that Federal and State officials have already successfully ironed out a number of such instances, which after all Your Excellency must admit have been but a few in comparison to the many thousands of Mexican citizens, or U.S. citizens of Mexican descent who reside happily in this State. I may point out the number of cases which your Embassy filed with the State Department and which subsequently came to my attention have been amicably settled, or are in process of settlement. (I can assure Your Excellency that my administration is heartily in sympathy with the Good Neighbor policy).<sup>202</sup>

While using one's own record may be smart in a campaign, it was not the best strategy to use with Padilla. The Texas ban originated from Mexico's perpetual disappointment with the Texas leadership's handling of specific incidents of racial discrimination.

A few days later, Dr. Padilla responded (see Appendix 2 for full text) and while remaining formal, he did not mince words. He setup his argument by making the point that Mexico would actually prefer to send braceros to Texas in the spirit of solidarity. In fact, he believed that the two nations recently "have given eloquent and repeated proofs that they are building up a new structure of reciprocal understanding founded on solid and enduring friendship." However, he then directly addressed the hurdle to their cooperation. He informed the Governor of the "situation actually prevailing in the State of Texas." Padilla then gave a recent example of racial discrimination and stated how

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<sup>202</sup> Bureau of International News Service, "The Good Neighbor Policy and Mexicans in Texas," in *National and International Problems Series*, ed. Department of State for Foreign Affairs (Mexico: Cooperativa Talleres Graficos de La Nacion, 1943), p 13.

prevalent discrimination truly was in Texas. Furthermore, he made the outstanding point that while Consuls report some incidents to the authorities, “newspapers and dwellers on the Texas border gather and transmit information directly reaching the whole people of the Republic of Mexico.” These reports, he continued, have “aroused a feeling of righteous indignation” among the Mexican people; which suggests that the issue for Texas was not only appeasing the Mexican Government, but appeasing the Mexican people.

After explaining why he could not lift the ban, Padilla offered a suggestion for how Stevenson might solve this “thorny” problem, “What remedies are available for solving this conflict? They are laws, wholesome propaganda, and penalties.” Padilla suggested that Mexico would support any efforts the governor was willing to make to improve the race relations or international relations as a whole.

While Stevenson did not achieve a diplomatic victory with his letter, Padilla’s response definitely left the door open. Stevenson therefore continued to follow through with his proactive policy against racial discrimination. Perhaps the most long-lasting impact brought about by this change was the Good Neighbor Commission that Stevenson referred to in his letter but did not identify by name. The Commission, which was established on August 9, 1943 with \$17,000 in funding from the OCIAA, consisted of six members, each of whom was appointed by the governor. If a new complaint came into the governor’s office concerning discrimination, the council was forwarded the letters. In addition, they often took the lead in promoting goodwill and preemptively trying to curb racial prejudice (this commission is discussed more thoroughly in a later chapter).



The most visible example of cultural-goodwill exhibited by Governor Stevenson was a two-week long tour of Mexico. This visit was carefully planned out Padilla, the State Department, the OCIAA, and the newly formed Good Neighbor Commission. In addition, the OCIAA made sure it was received an extraordinary amount of press coverage, creating ample opportunities for news reel clips. The strategy was similar to modern-day politicians who make several short appearances a day to maximize their local news coverage. The notes for one newsreel which played in Monterrey, Ciudad Victoria, and Mexico City reveal the tightly controlled presentation of Stevenson to Mexico:

Governor and delegation arrive by bus at Monterrey. Pretty girl in party carries banner (close-up) reading in Spanish "Greetings, Friends—from the Valley of the Rio Grande." Governor is greeted by Mexican dignataries (sic). Long shot of Governor and party in balcony of Gran Hotel Ancira. Party leaves for the State of Tamaulipas, to attend the local Agricultural Exposition (at the town Tamatán) in Ciudad Victoria (Tamaulipas). Governor Stevenson is greeted (with speech) by the Governor of Tamaulipas, Senor Magdaleno Aguilar. The two governors proceed to Exposition grounds and look around.<sup>203</sup>

The climax of Stevenson's time in Mexico was his participation in Mexico's Independence Day. This too was not coincidental. Stevenson and the State Department were hoping to come down sooner in a hope to resolve the issue as soon as possible and before the fall harvest season. However, Padilla insisted on Stevenson's appearance on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September celebration to maximize the effect. President Ávila Camacho and key members of his cabinet, including Padilla, appeared at the celebration event with three very special North American guests: Governor Stevenson, OCIAA Director Nelson Rockefeller, and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico George Messersmith. The pairing of Stevenson with two extremely vocal proponents of

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<sup>203</sup> Fox, *Fox Movietone News* 26, no. October 12 (1943).

the Good Neighbor Policy was not an accident. The trip was a calculated effort to show a policy change in Texas and to attain more Mexican workers to harvest Texas cotton. Governor Stevenson had finally put himself fully on board with the Good Neighbor Policy.<sup>204</sup>

Unfortunately for Stevenson, the results he wanted were not the resulted he achieved. Truly ending discrimination is much harder than making a few public appearances and issuing declarations. The 1960s Civil Rights Amendments proved that even making laws as Padilla suggestion cannot truly change the way people think. As for what Stevenson seemed to care about the most, the bracero ban against Texas lasted until 1947. Even then it was only rescinded because it had become ineffective. Texan growers had been recruiting laborers from the Mexican side of the border for quite some time, but beginning in 1945 large numbers of Mexicans began migrating north making the process much easier.

## **Conclusion: So What?**

The importance of Texas's version of ethnic diplomacy is two-fold: It reveals how a state can, or refuse not to, conduct its own foreign policy and it provides further insight into reasons why the United States government acts against racism. In an historical irony, Texas in wartime became diplomatically somewhat like they were politically during their time as a republic: independent, yet closely connected to the United States.

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<sup>204</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 63.

In its relationship with Mexico during World War II, Texas had a foreign policy of its own, but the best way to understand it is by its level of adherence to the State Department's stance on the same issue. Texas's governors during the 1940s initially acted independently from the State Department in terms of their relationship with Mexico concerning racial prejudice; however, Texan action, or inaction at first, is only understood as independent when compared with the federal government's ethnic diplomacy which began after Pearl Harbor. After a couple years of conflicting foreign policies, the priorities—although not the reasoning these priorities—of Coke Stevenson, the State Department, LULAC, and even Mexico aligned to the point where all parties could agree on the pursuance of cultural goodwill and a strategy for handling racial prejudices in Texas. Stevenson wanted the ban lifted, the State Department wanted good relations with Mexico, LULAC wanted Caucasian standing for Latinos, and Mexico wanted better long term relations with the United States and racial equality.<sup>205</sup>

Both federal and state level versions of ethnic diplomacy were motivated differently. As previously discussed, the federal policy went through a multi-phase shift. The primary motivation behind ethnic diplomacy for the State Department was sustaining hemispherical solidarity and the security and access to resources that come from such "good neighbors." On the other hand, Texas policy was more reactionary in manner. Once Mexico flexed its diplomatic power and prevented Texas from participating in the Emergency Farm Labor (bracero) program, Texas leadership became proactive themselves in currying Mexico's favor.

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<sup>205</sup> For more on LULAC's role see *ibid.*; Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy*; Benjamin Marquez, *LULAC : the Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

On the subject of whether or not an individual state can conduct its own foreign policy, Texas practiced ethnic diplomacy once Mexico decided to treat Texas differently than the rest of the United States. This serves as a very interesting case-study of a Latin American nation attempting to coerce *a state* to adhere to their terms. Thanks to the unique position of Mexico being able to influence the labor needs of Texas agriculture, they were able to affect something all politicians care about—large blocks of voters.<sup>206</sup> As a whole neither the federal government nor Texas decided to address racial prejudices with the purpose of simply ending their existence for that sake alone. Instead, action required both activists who were willing to advance the cause *and* additional political goals which overlapped with the concept of ethnically centered diplomacy or public policy. Indeed, it does take more than just seeing Russia from your house to influence foreign policy.

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<sup>206</sup> In the 1940s, Texas was by and large a predominantly agricultural state.

## Chapter 4: Ethnic Diplomacy Comes to California

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In 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that about 15.2 million people—or 40% of the population—identified as Hispanics or Latinos in California. 51 years prior, California also had a notably large Hispanic population (second to Texas). It was less than half a million people, but this still accounted for 16% of the population. This number grew rapidly throughout the war, and by its end, it is estimated that California had the largest Hispanic community in the United States. Given the relatively large population in 1940, and its rapid growth, it is not surprising that California experienced the most visible incidents of racial prejudice against Hispanics during World War II—after all, it would not be the first time California served as a catalyst of conflict between Mexico and the United States. However, despite negative historical memories, incidents such as the Sleepy Lagoon Murder and the Zoot Suit Riots, California did not garner the same disdain from Mexico as Texas. California was not subject to a bracero ban like Texas, nor did the Golden State garner the same political focus from Mexico's foreign affairs office as the Lone Star State. From a simple comparative standpoint, the racial violence in California was much more offensive than any violence that occurred in Texas and yet California was not punished by Mexico. California's ethnic diplomacy, which worked in close conjunction with the State Department was the difference.

Similar to Texas, during World War II California's version of ethnic diplomacy was largely determined by two governors: Culbert Olson and Earl Warren. Unlike the situation in Texas however, Olson and Warren were not from the same political party; in fact, they were political rivals who differed on a variety of issues. What makes this relationship most compelling is that Warren served as Olson's Attorney General before winning the seat himself and was then given the responsibility of implementing Olson's

policies against racial prejudice. The two had long been less than cooperative, but after Pearl Harbor their feuding hit an entirely new level. Irving Stone's biography of Earl Warren puts a lot of the blame onto Olson, stating that "Governor Culbert Olson distrusted all Republicans, reasoning that their one objective was to defeat him at the next election....very soon he came to the conclusion that the Attorney General's movements throughout the state were aimed at building a political machine which would enable Warren to supplant him in 1942."<sup>207</sup> Olson's biographer on the other hand explains the distrust as something that became more exacerbated as Olson continued to leave Warren out of California's wartime planning and defense.<sup>208</sup>

The historical records of these wartime governors are extremely interesting as they relate to their policies on racial prejudice. Warren's career is paradoxical. He is best remembered for the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; but, as governor his stance on racial prejudice is notoriously tied to Japanese internment. FDR's Executive Order 9066, which made internment a reality, came in February of 1942 with a large amount of support from then California Attorney General Earl Warren who was tasked with implementing the order. As the gubernatorial election unfolded over the next few months, Governor Olson and the hyper-active Attorney General clashed over the internment of approximately 110,000 people. Most historical literature—including some apologetic biographers—places Warren as the major advocate of the order. While internment officially began under Olson's tenure, his support was reluctant and he initially believed that the camps

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<sup>207</sup> Irving Stone, *Earl Warren, a great American story* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948).

<sup>208</sup> Robert E. Burke, *Olson's New Deal for California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953).

were unnecessary. This provided ammunition for Warren who took ownership of the program. Warren's campaign emphasized this difference in racist and colorful language, labeling Olson as a "Jap Lover."<sup>209</sup> If one is to believe Warren's campaign literature, Olson was busy entertaining Japanese delegations as late as 1942, while Warren was rounding up Japanese dissidents.<sup>210</sup> Warren also targeted Olson's plan to utilize interned prisoners to meet the labor shortage. Instead, Warren wanted to "shut the door" on the camps. This political attack garnered substantial press coverage. Within days, embellished headlines such as "Olson Assailed for Jap Plan: Use of Orientals for Farm Labor Called 'Unthinkable,'" and "Olson Called War Failure" made its way into California's newspapers. Perhaps the most aggressive attack from Warren's camp came when a group of interned prisoners requested absentee ballots. While this appears to have been an independent effort on the prisoners' part, Warren's people accused the Olson administration of trying to secure a few extra votes from the Japanese prisoners—further painting Olson as "soft" on securing the Pacific coast. Olson and Warren definitely had different ideas about race, especially when it came to security. However, just as in Texas, a single (albeit highly controversial) example does not provide enough evidence to make a blanket generalization about their roles in ethnic diplomacy.

While Olson and Warren were rivals, they had similar strategies for promoting ethnic relations between California and Mexico. After all they did formulate the initial strategy while working together as colleagues. While they had similar results, Culbert

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<sup>209</sup> Sumi K. Cho, "Redeeming Whiteness in the Shadow of Internment: Earl Warren, *Brown*, and a Theory of Racial Redemption," *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 19, no. 1 (1998): 73-170.

<sup>210</sup> See Campaign Ad: Before and After Pearl Harbor, File 3640:5336. Earl Warren Papers, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.



Olson and Earl Warren had different approaches to managing California's relationship with Mexico: Olson was led by idealism and his support of FDR's Good Neighbor Policy, while Warren carefully balanced his state's farm labor needs, the views of his constituents, and the diffusing of a potentially explosive racially-charged environment.

### ***Culbert Olson, The Sleepy Lagoon Murder, and Mexican Friendship Day***

Unfortunately, at this point in time dissecting Culbert Olson's specific actions in terms of dealing with racial prejudice against people of Latin American ancestry is very difficult. The internal records for his term in office are practically nonexistent.

Thankfully, a combination of federal records, speeches, proclamations, and a published collection of his papers shed enough light onto the topic to comprehend his ideology, his commitment to FDR and his policies—especially the Good Neighbor Policy, and the State Department's ethnic diplomacy.<sup>211</sup>

Culbert Levy Olson is perhaps one of the most interesting and resolute governor's in California's history. He has the distinction of being the first Democrat to hold the office since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>212</sup> His path to the governorship began with a state senate seat as part of the Upton Sinclair's End Poverty in California campaign in 1934. While Sinclair, the famed former Socialist Party leader, lost his bid for governor as a recently converted Democrat, Olson won his seat representing Los Angeles and went

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<sup>211</sup> Burke, *Olson's New Deal for California*.

<sup>212</sup> Democrat James Bud held the office from 1895 to 1899. After Olson it was not until 1959 when another Democrat was sworn into California's highest post—Edmund Gerald “Pat” Brown Sr. The one non-Republican exception between Bud and Olson in 1938 was Hiram Johnson, who was a member of the Progressive Party and is best known as being Teddy Roosevelt's Vice-Presidential running mate in the 1912 “Bull-Moose” bid.

on to win the 1938 gubernatorial election with Roosevelt's endorsement. In an interesting comparison to Texas Governor, W. Lee O'Daniel, Olson also had a difficult time in office from the very start. His personal life was shattered only days after his inauguration where he deemed the defense of civil liberties his "sacred duty." He collapsed and was diagnosed with an ailing heart, while not long afterwards his wife died. Politically, things went just as poorly. Olson was a victim of extreme partisanship, being blocked at nearly every turn as his progressive views met resistance from the largely Republican state senate and the conservative Democrat controlled house. In addition, his atheism ostracized him further from California's Christian population.<sup>213</sup>

While his time as governor was not the most productive, he was a very prolific public speaker and his opinions on racial discrimination are well recorded. One topic that he occasionally discussed was tolerance. This was vocalized on a number of occasions; however, never more clearly than in his April 5, 1941 speech entitled, "Council Against Intolerance in America."

But in our country, where from the earliest days, people came to escape one sort or another of suppression and oppression, where, since earliest settlement, people of all races and creeds and shades of belief came in search of freedom; freedom of mind and religion as well as economic freedom; we have found constant and continuing need for tolerance within our own land. We needed it in order that we might live together as neighbors, as Good Neighbors.<sup>214</sup>

While no records exist to corroborate his usage of the term "good neighbors" in this speech, given his highly partisan record and coattail relationship with FDR it would be an extraordinary accident if Olson was *not* implying a double meaning of good

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<sup>213</sup> In a very controversial move he refused to say "under God" during his inaugural oath. Burke, *Olson's New Deal for California*.

<sup>214</sup> Culbert Olson, "Council Against Intolerance in America," in *State Papers and Public Addresses: Governor Culbert L. Olson* (Palace Hotel, San Francisco April 5, 1941).

neighbors within the United States and the United States as a “Good Neighbor” with Latin America.

Olson was also ahead of his time in his support of Pan-American Day, supporting the holiday at a time when the holiday did not stretch to the American southwest. In a 1939 proclamation he extolled the unity of American nations through a “common bond of mutual understanding and mutual cooperation.” He went on to point out that “...all follow the same general pattern of self-government. Our economics are basically alike. Our culture provides stimulus to all of us, one with the other. Standing firm on this rock of mutuality, we need not fear, singly or collectively, penetration of ideologies foreign to our inherent conceptions.”<sup>215</sup>

Even though Olson was a liberal on race relations, his public addresses starting in 1942 became more specific with regard to cultivating better race relations and a greater understanding between all Americans. The most notable reasons for this change in policy were the beginning of World War II, the State Department’s increased emphasis on ethnic diplomacy, and most specifically for California, the Sleepy Lagoon murder. A better understanding of the Sleepy Lagoon incident is necessary to fully understand trend towards ethnic diplomacy.

The Sleepy Lagoon case began as a straightforward yet violent crime, but ended as a major element in the wartime relationship between Mexico and the United States. The visibility of this type of case was something that the State Department had been trying to avoid since the inception of ethnic diplomacy. In a letter that circulated through

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<sup>215</sup> "Proclamation: Setting Aside April 14, 1939 as "Pan-American Day"," in *State Papers and Public Addresses: Governor Culbert L. Olson* (April 14, 1939).

the Division of American Republics, the El Paso Consul asked the Washington D.C. office about holding hearings against racial discrimination as a way to ameliorate relations with Mexicans. The response, penned by Laurence Duggan right hand man and Assistant Chief of the Division of the American Republics George Winters, was clear, “I am strongly opposed to the holding of public hearings in the Southwest on racial discrimination for the following reasons....” Winters goes on to argue that education and investment in Mexico were the two things he believes will help the two countries reach a better understanding. He also pointed out that “I feel that public hearings, with accusations and testimony from both sides (and there are two sides) would be certain to increase the existing ill feeling, just at a time when we are trying to diminish that feeling.” He also reasoned that a record of public hearings would give ammunition to “Axis agents” who were “seeking to discredit us in Mexico.” When this letter made its way to Laurence Duggan’s desk, a key advisor on all U.S.-Latin American relations at the time, he added that “I thoroughly agree with your conclusion,” and asked Winters to prepare a letter specific to Roosevelt.<sup>216</sup>

Despite the State Department’s best efforts, the murder trial in Southern California became a racially charged spectacle. It ultimately became significant for its symbolism, motivation for political activism, and international public interest rather than for the crime itself. The victim, twenty-two year old José Díaz, unfortunately became more of a footnote as the case became increasingly politicized. Despite the polarization that occurred in Los Angeles—and eventually across North America—Díaz’s story definitely qualifies as a true murder mystery.

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<sup>216</sup> Letter from Assistant Chief of the Division of the American Republics Specialist George Winters to El Paso Consulate (Strictly Confidential, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives.

Díaz decided to attend a neighborhood party thrown by the Delgadillo family in honor of their daughter Eleanor's birthday; however, the story is instantly intriguing as the record indicates that Díaz, prior to his departure, had told his mother that he had a strange feeling about attending the party. Díaz then walked the short distance to the party amidst the meager ethnic-minority housing of rural Los Angeles County on Williams Ranch near a swimming place nicknamed "Sleepy Lagoon," where he was greeted as an invited guest. Díaz knew that this would likely be one of the last times he saw his friends and neighbors, but not because of his impending death. Instead Díaz, a native Mexican, had volunteered to fight for his adopted country and was to report to a local recruiting center on Monday. This being the case, Díaz uncharacteristically drank until late in the night, leaving with a couple of men at about one o'clock in the morning. He staggered away from the Delgadillo's home, but once he was out of range of the single porch light he was viciously attacked, suffering several blows to his face, arms, and head until he was eventually punctured twice in the stomach with an ice pick. He died a few hours later in Los Angeles General Hospital.<sup>217</sup>

Even before the suspects were indicted, Díaz's death was polarizing. The *Los Angeles Times* in the 1940s was still a conservative paper in regard to social values, including racial boundaries.<sup>218</sup> Its coverage of Díaz's death hit the front page; however,

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<sup>217</sup> Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon : Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Other sources tell the story a bit differently, ranging from gang warfare to a car accident as the cause of death. That being said, Pagán's work represents the most thorough research in this author's opinion and therefore is the one represented here.

See S. Guy Endore, *The Sleepy Lagoon Mystery* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1972).; Carey McWilliams, "Second Thoughts," *The Nation* 228(1979): 358; Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee Los Angeles., *The Sleepy Lagoon Case* (Los Angeles, Calif., 1943); Manuel P. Servín, *The Mexican-Americans: an Awakening Minority* (Beverly Hills,: Glencoe Press, 1970).

<sup>218</sup> Errol Wayne Stevens, *Radical L.A. : from Coxey's Army to the Watts Riots, 1894-1965* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

it was only covered as part of a larger article that generalized a particularly eventful weekend of violence in East Los Angeles. East Los Angeles in this context referred to the industrial neighborhoods near the railroads, specifically the mixed race neighborhoods which began in the African-American dominated Central Avenue district and went eastward to Boyle Heights, Brooklyn Heights, and Lincoln Heights. The “in between” racial status of Mexican-Americans put them in an interesting place as a social group; Mexican Americans were technically “Caucasian” and were not susceptible to the same restrictions as African Americans and therefore had more freedom in choosing where they lived.<sup>219</sup> Most dwelled in the aforementioned Eastern racially diverse neighborhoods, but thanks to their inclusion as “Caucasians,” others were able to move into areas dominated by whites, making them a much more visible minority to whites during the war.

Thus, when the *Times* featured an article about violence in East L.A., citing Díaz’s murder as evidence, it was sending a very specific message. The coverage of the Sleepy Lagoon Murder was part of a larger campaign against “juvenile crime” that began a few months earlier in the spring of 1942. At the same time that Executive Order 9066 was being carried out in Los Angeles through the rounding up of Japanese Americans, this campaign exaggerated the extent of juvenile crime amongst Mexican-Americans. Newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times* and Hearst’s *Examiner* carried article after article embellishing the reality of the racially estranged. As Carey McWilliams, eventual chairman of the Citizens’ Committee for the Defense of Mexican

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<sup>219</sup> For more on the “in between” status of Mexican-Americans see Neil Foley, *The White Scourge : Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, American crossroads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

American Youth and then Commissioner of Immigration and Housing in California, wrote retrospectively in *Southern California: An Island on the Land*, “they soon had the public clamoring in semi-hysterical fashion, for ‘action’ and ‘strong methods.’”<sup>220</sup>

By the time of Díaz’s murder, Los Angeles Area law enforcement, led by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), had answered the media and the white population’s outcry by cracking down on Mexican youth violence. It was this heightened awareness of youth violence that initially made the case so high profile. The law enforcement agencies proceeded to make an example out of this particular episode and questioned hundreds of young men and women over the next few weeks, eventually announcing that twenty-two members of the 38<sup>th</sup> Street Gang were responsible for the murder.

The legal portion of this incident, known as *People v. Zammora*, began in October 1942. Looking at the case from a broad perspective, and comparing it to countless other racially charged legal cases, the initial result was not surprising. A hard-nosed judge known as Charles “San Quentin” Fricke was assigned the case, noteworthy since he had sent more men to San Quentin than any other judge in California history. The final verdict came in January of 1943 and tallied seventeen guilty young Mexican-Americans. However, it was hardly a verdict handed down by a jury of “peers.” The twelve white jurors had been openly hostile towards the defense’s legal team and had been allowed to read the one-sided press coverage while the trial was in progress. While it may not have been as blatantly racially obtuse as *Pace v. Alabama*

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<sup>220</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: an Island on the Land* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1973). as found in Stevens, *Radical L.A. : from Coxey's Army to the Watts Riots, 1894-1965*.

(1883) or the two cases regarding Japanese internment: *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943) and *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), there was most definitely a racial division in Los Angeles which affected the defendant's fate.<sup>221</sup>

The key aspect of the Sleepy Lagoon incident is the connection between race, grass-roots politics, and governor-U.S Foreign Policy politics. Much of the Mexican-American community in Los Angeles, along with Mexican-American civil rights groups, and Mexican officials were upset with the outcome of the *People v. Zammora*. Aware of the potential unrest, Walter Laves, director of the OCIAA's Inter-American Division arrived in Los Angeles in October to observe the trial (more on Laves and the Inter-American Division in the next chapter). Laves and a representative from the Office of War Information met with journalists and local officials in an effort to restrain discriminatory views and diffuse the tense situation. Laves also met with leaders from within the Los Angeles Mexican population and promised to intervene to improve their social standing and address the racism. The OCIAA had a notable presence in Los Angeles during the trial and throughout the rest of the war.

It was not just the federal government acting however. With the blessing of Laves, a handful of progressive thinkers from this community decided to organize in the wake of the Sleepy Lagoon incident. They formed the Citizen's Committee for the Defense of Mexican American Youth (also known as Sleepy Lagoon Defense

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<sup>221</sup> Interestingly, over five years of surveying my undergraduate students I have discovered that my students are more likely to remember the fictitious court case from John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* rather than any actual historical case. Most of the students have read or seen *A Time to Kill*, but have not even heard of any of the other racially centered court cases, including *People v. Zammora*. Perhaps part of this can be attributed to Random House, the publisher of *A Time to Kill*, marketing their book with a "Teacher's Guide" for high school and middle school social science teachers: Judith Turner, "Random House, Inc Teacher's guide: A Time to Kill," [http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/teachers\\_guides/9780440245919.pdf](http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/teachers_guides/9780440245919.pdf); Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon : Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.*



Committee) before the case's final remarks were made. Their goal was to appeal the expected verdict and "procure justice for the boys." Their initial letter for support read, "We are not being pessimistic, just factual."<sup>222</sup> A key method to their success was making the case nationally-known and utilizing the unique wartime situation to harness international pressure.

The first major publication to come from the Citizen's Committee for the Defense of Mexican American Youth was *The Sleepy Lagoon Case*, a free-to-distribute pamphlet first published in June 1943, outlining their viewpoint on the case. The committee was quite effective at gaining support for their cause, arguably more successful than any previous group in California with racial-equality minded goals, and even got Orson Welles to write the foreword. At the time this was quite the endorsement, given that Welles had just released *Citizen Kane* in 1941 and *The Magnificent Ambersons* in 1942.<sup>223</sup> Another interesting way of viewing Welles's involvement, besides just a Hollywood endorsement, is that it was a direct attack on William Randolph Hearst due to his newspaper's adversarial role in the case; not as public or memorable as those found in *Citizen Kane*, but political and controversial nonetheless.<sup>224</sup> Welles had also personally played a role with Nelson Rockefeller's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Motion Picture Division. Welles shot a feature film consisting of three

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<sup>222</sup> Clore Warne, undated letter [ca. December 1942], Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee Papers, Box 4, Folder 4. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California. Many of the progressive thinking members that joined the Citizen's Committee were later labeled as communists, many seeing unwanted attention in the McCarthy era.

<sup>223</sup> While the initial box office reception of these two films does not parallel their listing as some of the best films of all time, Welles was still a major Hollywood player based on his past laurels and the fact that both of these films (his first two in Hollywood) were nominated for best picture.

<sup>224</sup> *Citizen Kane* is a brutal representation of William Randolph Hearst in the form of Charles Foster Kane. The film's production was a battle between Welles and Hearst and was significantly delayed thanks to Hearst's influence in Hollywood. For more information see Thomas Lennon, *The Battle over Citizen Kane*. PBS Video: The American Experience, 2000.

short stories: "My Friend Bonito," "Carnaval" (or "The Story of Samba"), and "Jangadeiros"<sup>225</sup> The three segments were shot entirely in Mexico and Brazil and promoted a greater appreciation of Latin America; unfortunately, Nelson Rockefeller left the board of directors of the film's sponsor RKO Radio Pictures, and the film project was terminated.<sup>226</sup> Welles's contribution to the pamphlet was only a single page, but it directly addressed the problem of racial prejudice against Mexican Americans. He simply recalled something that had stuck in his head about "The Pachuco Murder" from waiting in line at the Army induction center.<sup>227</sup> A seemingly random encounter with gentleman identified as Pete Vasquez told Welles,

The fellas down in our section—there's nothing bad about them, no more than anywhere else. But things are tough. There's nowhere to go—no place to play games—or nothing—. If the cops catch you on the street after 8 o'clock, usually they run you in—or rough you up, anyway. If you look like a Mexican you just better stay off the street, that's all—. And where can you go? It's real bad. I'm going into the Army, and it's all right with me. I'm glad to be going. Things'll be better in the Army, and I'm glad of the chance to fight. It makes it hard, though, for a lot of our fellas to see things that way. They want to fight for their country, all right—but they want to feel like it's their country.<sup>228</sup>

While Welles's experience with Vasquez was probably more of a discussion over the Zoot Suit Riots than the Sleepy Lagoon trial, his concern for the cause made for a credible opening among the thousands who received a copy.

The international approach in the Citizen's Committee's argument is obvious from the very beginning of the pamphlet's text; in fact, the prologue essentially argues

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<sup>225</sup> Welles had shown a serious interest in Latin America with his unfinished film, *It's All True*, shot in Mexico and Brazil. The story of this film is thoroughly discussed in Catherine L. Benamou, *It's All True : Orson Welles's Pan-American Odyssey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>226</sup> Some of the film's black and white nitrate negative was found in a vault and was presented to the UCLA Film and Television Archive in the 1980s.

<sup>227</sup> A Pachuco is a term used to describe the zoot-suit wearing Hispanic youth culture of the era. They were always well dressed and exerted a certain amount of flamboyancy and confidence. A Pachuca was a female counterpart, dressed in an extravagant evening dress.

<sup>228</sup> Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee Los Angeles., *The Sleepy Lagoon Case*.

that Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy was at risk thanks to the trial's (and all other acts of) racial injustice. A particularly interesting point is how the prologue's author, Executive Secretary of the Council for Pan American Democracy Marion Bachrach, related the almost-year-old Sleepy Lagoon trial to racial violence across the nation, including against African-Americans. The Council had previously published a pamphlet in 1940 detailing the Havana Conference and would later fund another about the rise of fascism in Argentina.<sup>229</sup> She pointed out how "just as the first edition of this pamphlet was rolling off the press...in widely scattered parts of the country, those insurrections which President Roosevelt declared 'endanger our national unity and comfort our enemy' were indeed taking place." She specifically mentioned Mobile (Alabama), Beaumont (Texas), Los Angeles and Detroit; however, even more interesting was the fact that she believed these instances "made clear to the whole nation the pattern of Axis plans for the disruption of the home front at a time when the perspective of a speed victory abroad was opening...."<sup>230</sup> Bachrach believed this Axis plan of racial divisiveness began with the unjust Sleepy Lagoon verdict. Bachrach and her Council for Pan-American Democracy would later be discovered as Communist fronts. Marion herself was the sister of John Abt, the chief counsel to the Communist Party USA and the Council for Pan-American Democracy which would be officially labeled a "Subversive Organization" by Attorney General Herbert Brownell Jr. in 1955.

While an underground Axis plot to racially divide the United States is conspiracy theory at its best, Bachrach labeled of the Zoot Suit Riots as "anti-Mexican pogroms"

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<sup>229</sup> Dr. Charles Obermeyer, "The Havana Conference" *Council for Pan-American Democracy*. 1940. Ricardo M. Setaro, "Argentina, Fascist Headquarters," *Council for Pan-American Democracy*. 1944.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

and their international implications proved to be accurate. She believed the racial prejudices found within the United States “produced a situation which continues [to be] dangerous to hemisphere unity and to the war effort.” In addition, she reminded readers of Mexico’s most impactful tool for exerting pressure onto the United States—the U.S. need for Mexican labor: “Foreign Minister Padilla of Mexico has been obliged to make the further migration of Mexican agricultural workers to the United States dependent on firm measures to assure that they are not discriminated against when they cross the border.”<sup>231</sup>

Bachrach also cited Roosevelt and Ávila Camacho from their face-to-face meeting on April 20, 1943. She gave a few lines from each speech, proving how the two leaders see their nation’s founding fathers as—in Roosevelt’s words—“men of the same stamp.” As many political critics do, Bachrach took a public statement and associates it with his present situation—the result was an immediate contradiction due to racial prejudice:

The conviction of the 17 boys in the Sleepy Lagoon case is based on the "theory" that the Catholic priest Hidalgo and the Indian liberator Juarez, far from being "men of the same stamp as Washington and Jefferson," were "biologically inferior." And that their descendents can find no common cause with the "Anglo-Saxon" children of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln.

The immediate and unconditional pardon of the 17 boys would therefore represent an important victory over that "theory" and over the chief propagator of racist nonsense—Adolf Hitler. The demand for their pardon is more than a matter of simple justice—it has become a weapon for victory.<sup>232</sup>

While the State Department already had a vested interest in ending racial prejudice, it is obvious that from the very beginning community organizations—with

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<sup>231</sup> Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee Los Angeles., *The Sleepy Lagoon Case*.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

varying degrees of communist influence—advocating racial equality for Mexican-Americans were able to leverage this connection between foreign policy and racism in the United States to their advantage.<sup>233</sup>

Unfortunately, the issue of race in southern California as it relates to international relations was not as straightforward for the State Department as it was in other locations. The threat of *Sinarquismo* made simply quelling, appeasing, or holding cultural events an inadequate response given the wartime situation. *Sinarquismo*, or Mexican Synarchism, was a strong challenge to the ruling party of Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (popularly known in Spanish with the acronym PRI) and was rooted in the extreme right of the Catholic church. Many political commentators have likened their ideals to fascism. The concern truly became relevant to this narrative on September 11, 1941, when President Ávila Camacho authorized the right-wing (and often assumed Nazi sympathizing) *Unión Nacional Sinarquista* (UNS) to form a colony in Bahía Magdalena, Baja California in a shortsighted effort to get them far away from the capital.<sup>234</sup> This was especially controversial because Mexico had built up its military defenses in the area prior to the war, making it the focus of their Pacific defense with a new naval base and five airfields in the region.<sup>235</sup> Therefore, when the Pearl Harbor attack caused political and military scrambling across the entire American Pacific coast, the founding of the UNS colony, named María Auxiliadora, five days later on December

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<sup>233</sup> This is discussed more in the following chapter.

<sup>234</sup> Eduardo J. Correa, *El Balance del Avila Camachismo* (Méjico, 1946). Michael Mathes, "The Two Californias during World War II," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1965): 323-31.

<sup>235</sup> Fearing a Japanese invasion, U.S. troops mobilized in the border towns of Tijuana-San Diego and Mexicali-Calexico. Mexican troops stopped the U.S. forces from fortifying Baja California. Former president and nationalist Lázaro Cárdenas was acting as the military commander of Northwestern Mexico and refused their entry. Ultimately a deal was struck where the U.S. was allowed to setup radar installations on Mexican land and perform surveillance on the coastlines. Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 67.

12<sup>th</sup> raised some major concerns in American West. Why would Mexico authorize the group of Mexicans most politically similar to the Axis powers, to settle near the U.S. border alongside the nation's biggest supply of military equipment on the Pacific Ocean? This reality, combined with Mexico's delayed declaration of war against Japan and Germany in May 22, 1942, and only after multiple Mexican vessels were destroyed by German submarines, as compared to most Central American and Caribbean neighbors which declared war within days of Pearl Harbor. To make matters worse, many U.S. leaders believed that the Mexican-American immigrant population was filled with rightists, some even estimated 50,000 UNS members lived in California.<sup>236</sup>

The impact of *Sinarquismo* on ethnic diplomacy complicates the direct connection of racial prejudice with U.S. foreign relations and makes California's case unique. Once newspapers, especially Hearst newspapers, began chronicling the misbehavior of the Mexican youth and the Sleepy Lagoon case in Southern California there was an immediate interest from the national government that had more to do with preventing a Mexican-American based, UNS led, fifth-column than improving race relations for the sake of international cooperation. Fear of fascism in the 1930s and early 1940s was not uncommon in the United States and was definitely not isolated to Southern California. The American Left often associated political threats from the Right with fascist thought: People such as Henry Ford (anti-labor union), Charles Lindbergh

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<sup>236</sup> The Mexican perspective is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter. However, for clarification it is important to note that while the United States viewed this behavior as suspicious; in reality, the Mexican leadership was not plotting against the Allies. Camacho's administration simply felt as though the immediate breaking of relations with Germany and Japan after Pearl Harbor was a strong enough step of hemispherical loyalty at that point in time. They did not want to follow the United States blindly into war simply because the United States was *asking them*. The rightists were a large threat to PRI legitimacy as well; their relocation to northern Mexico colony seems to have been beneficial to stabilizing Mexican leadership.

(isolationism), and William Randolph Hearst (reactionary newspapers) became targets. To those who viewed fascism with this loose definition, the Mexican-American injustice in Los Angeles was an example of fascism spreading at home, an attempt to perpetuate the exploitation of an entire race of people. For believers in conspiracy, Hearst's involvement and the seemingly exaggerated coverage of Mexican-American gang violence proved the existence of a *Sinarquista* plot.<sup>237</sup> In many ways, the United States government feared *Sinarquismo* as they did the Japanese-American population, proving yet again that racial categorization was a legitimate means of addressing security concerns. A major FBI investigation surrounded the juvenile delinquency of Los Angeles in 1942, with special attention paid to *Sinarquismo*. In the end of course, the report found the threat to be falsely represented. The Mexican-Americans involved were not fascists, and they were not in league with the people printing the hysteria-causing articles in the newspaper, and most importantly they were not trying to overthrow the United States.

The Los Angeles Grand Jury had a major responsibility in regards to the upcoming Sleepy Lagoon Trial. They were living in a highly racialized area, during a highly racialized time period and sought outside consultation. Before the initial *People v. Zammora* trial (October 19, - January 12, 1943), which was the largest mass trial in California history at the time, the Los Angeles County Grand Jury heard the testimony of Guy T. Nunn, Field Representative of the OCIAA collaborating War Manpower

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<sup>237</sup> Heart was famously against the war prior to Pearl Harbor and thanks to archival records and William E. Dodd's (American Ambassador to Germany in the 1930s) diary it has been discovered that FDR was at least aware of Hearst's connections in Germany and Italy. Hearst has been associated with the goals of the "America First" anti-war movement, although never linked directly. A good narration of their common goals was given by David Gordon, "America First: The Anti-War Movement, Charles Lindbergh and the Second World War, 1940-41" Presented at a joint meeting of the Historical Society and The New York Military Affairs Symposium. September 26, 2003.

Commission's Minority Groups Service. Nunn hoped to set the tone for the entire trial and began by congratulating the L.A. Grand Jury for "its public spirited determination" to learn about "the basic facts underlying the 'Mexican' juvenile delinquency problem."<sup>238</sup>

Nunn's testimony was a broad take on the Los Angeles juvenile delinquency problem, relating it to more general causes and contextualizing it internationally. He began with some numerical analysis of the Mexican-American population—mainly data from the 1940 census. He estimated that 3.5 million people of Spanish-speaking descent lived in the United States and "approximately 50% of them are still nationals of Mexico or are incompletely naturalized." More importantly than this type of ethnographic data was his assertion that "whatever the national or racial origin of this population group, it is improper, misleading and dangerous, to deal with juvenile delinquency among them as though it were a 'Mexican' problem."<sup>239</sup> Instead, he blamed delinquency on "poverty, excessive housing concentration, social and economic discrimination," which in his opinion was far more characteristic of the Spanish-speaking minority than "juvenile delinquency." Therefore he argued that a juvenile delinquency problem did indeed exist, but was not caused by skin color. Instead, the situation was caused by limited employment opportunities "which this group has been confined by a combination of historical coincidence, deliberate design on the part of certain employing classes, and gross-neglect or short-sightedness on the part of many community and government agencies in their handling of Spanish Americans."<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Testimony of Guy T. Nunn, Field Representative, Minority Groups Service, War Manpower Commission Before the Los Angeles County Grand Jury, October 8, 1942. Ron Lopez Papers, Box 2, Folder 25, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. Los Angeles.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.



With this more sociological paradigm of Los Angeles's racial strife, Nunn made a series of notable suggestions to the Grand Jury—which taken as a whole is a form of ethnic diplomacy—a phrase he practically stated himself:

Of more immediate importance than any of the steps previously mentioned, however, would be the creation, under the auspices of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, of an administrative apparatus especially geared to serve the needs of Spanish-speaking people within the United States. No more effective gesture of international good will could be made in the direction of Latin America.<sup>241</sup>

Some of his suggestions were extremely radical for the time. They included desegregating schools and government sponsored vocational labor programs for “delinquent youth.”

As the months passed and the trial's guilty verdict arrived, it seems as though Nunn's suggestions fell on deaf ears inside the courtroom. However, the government leaders who believed in ethnic diplomacy, including Governor Olson, seemed to have paid closer attention. While the lack of documentation leaves a hole in understanding Olson's exact involvement; thankfully, Governor Olson made a visible shift in his public actions. Olson's increase in awareness of Latin American heritage is notable beginning in 1942, particularly after the Sleepy Lagoon murder. The best examples are his adoption of Cabrillo Day, Mexican Friendship Day, and an official proclamation against racial discrimination.

Olson sought to bring a certain level of understanding to his state when it came to race. Beginning in 1942 this took an ethnic diplomacy turn when he made interesting comments on Cabrillo Day. Olson sought to promote a stronger cultural awareness through events such as Cabrillo Day, but he still did so carefully. The last thing Olson

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

needed in an election year was more political fodder for Warren's camp, his Cabrillo Day speech is a good example of this balance. The celebration commemorates the Portuguese explorer, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, and his "discovery" of what is today San Diego Bay. In his September 28 radio address, Olson began by crediting Cabrillo with the "discovery of California," but then qualified the statement by pointing out that he "was the first white man to set foot on California soil." He also further diminished Cabrillo's importance—which is unusual for an address designed to praise the explorer—by pointing out that he "stayed only six days, barely long enough to make friends with the native Indians, replenish his fresh food and water supplies...." By today's standards Olson may seem traditional in his praise for a European explorer; however, by 1942 standards his remarks were quite progressive.

While the Cabrillo Day celebration provides some insight into the way Olson handled racial strife in a state with an increasingly racially diverse population, his proclamation of Mexican Friendship Day provides a better example of his role as a purveyor of an international relationship with Mexico. Set on Mexican Independence Day, September 16, the proclamation also called for public ceremonies "*celebrating Mexican independence and honoring the government, the people and the President of Mexico*" in Los Angeles in front of the State Building. The location and timing were largely a culturally diplomatic way to respond to the recent racial strife. The message here is very clear:

Our Nation is at war against powerful and ruthless enemy nations and peoples. At our side in this great struggle stand the government and the people of our good neighbor republic, the United States of Mexico...Hundreds of thousands of Mexican citizens reside in California. Thousands of Californians reside in Mexico. The very cultures and histories of the two states have much in common,

even unto their origins. Commercially we are very dependent on one another.... Therefore, the friendship that exists between the people and the governments of the two states, Mexico and California, is strong because it is natural, and real because it is mutual. Moreover, it is of the greatest possible importance to us all, now that our people are “brothers in arms.”<sup>242</sup>

The celebration was highlighted by a speech given by Vice President Henry A. Wallace, entitled *Three More Freedoms*.<sup>243</sup> Wallace gave the speech in Spanish and hit on many of the key points. He first summarized Mexican history since their time of independence, emphasizing the relationship between Christianity and the revolution. Then he touched on the relationship between Mexico and the United States, using his previous meetings with Mexican President Ávila Camacho to substantiate his claim that “We can all be glad to see the increasing cordiality in relations between our two countries.” While he left out the Mexican-American War in his historical account, he did address the less than congenial past relationship:

The Mexican people are showing that whatever misunderstanding may have existed in the past is disappearing, and that a solid friendship based on mutual respect and understanding is taking its place. Nowhere is this friendship more strikingly demonstrated than right here in California, where several hundred thousand persons of Mexican ancestry are American citizens. Mexico and California have the same heritage, the same ancient tradition. The acquisition of California as territory of the United States was a part of the frontier history of both countries. The present offers a unique case, here in California, of what might have been a sore spot—an “Irredenta”—but which actually has become instead a fusion ground for two cultures. Hitler could never understand that.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> For full text of this document please see Appendix 3. “Proclamation: Mexican Friendship Day,” in *State Papers and Public Addresses: Culbert L. Olson* (September 16, 1942).

<sup>243</sup> For full text of this document please see Appendix 4. “MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE AND NEW WORLD IDEALS: Three More Freedoms” Speech by Henry A. Wallace, Vice-President of the United States. Approximate English translation of address delivered in Spanish on the occasion of the celebration of Mexico's Independence Day at Los Angeles, Cal., September 16, 1942. Ibiblio.org Accessed March 20, 2013.

The “Three Freedoms” he is referring to are in addition to the “Four Freedoms” promised by FDR—freedom of speech and religion, freedom from want and fear. However, Wallace adds three more freedoms—“first, the freedom to buy land at a reasonable price; second, the freedom to borrow money at a reasonable rate of interest; and third, the freedom to establish schools which teach the realities of life.”

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

Wallace also addressed the present relationship between Mexico and California, stating that “they have a special kinship at the present time because of the bonds of a common peril.” He goes on to describe how each nation has helped in defending the western coast of the continent. The most interesting aspect of this speech was his vision for the future relationship between California and Mexico:

I like to look into the future when our common bonds will be of a more tangible nature than at any time in the past, when Californians will find it possible to drive from Nogales to Guadalajara and thence to Mexico City and Acapulco. I like to think of ten times as many Californians speaking Spanish as are able to do so today. I like to think of them enjoying the Mexican music, understanding the words of the Mexican songs when they hear them. I like to think of Californians investing money in Mexico, not on a coyote basis, as Mexicans would say, but on a fair and decent basis. Dollar diplomacy died ten years ago. Coyote investments also will die, and so will all other forms of imperialism, direct or indirect.<sup>245</sup>

Wallace then quickly turned the focus of his speech onto the economic relationship. He argued that “Mexico is of great service in our united war effort by producing to the limit of steel, mercury, copper, tungsten, strontium, zinc, lead and all the other metals with which she is so richly endowed and which are needed, so badly by the war industries of our own country.” He also reiterated Ávila Camacho’s point. That Mexico’s role in the war may not be fighting on foreign battlefields, but the operating of industries, farms, mines and forests. He also addressed the bracero labor agreement which was only recently passed at the time:

This mutual war effort is giving our two countries an opportunity to cooperate in countless ways....Or take the cooperative arrangement by which Mexican workers will come into the United States to help harvest our crops and do other

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<sup>245</sup> A Coyote Investment is an illegal labor arrangement that pays a Mexican smuggler to bring Mexican workers across the border so they can work in the United States illegally. The “coyote” would provide paperwork and transportation for the workers. For more information see Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America : a history* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

war work—not on the basis of low-wage competition as in the past, but with the whole-hearted assistance and protection of the two governments. Just as dollar diplomacy has become a thing of the past, so also let us hope that the arrangements entered into by our two governments will definitely end exploitation of and discrimination against Mexican labor.<sup>246</sup>

In his closing remark, the Vice-President looked to the hypothetical post-victory world, where he felt the “New World ideals” would be needed even more to preserve a world-wide peace. He understood that this peace would not be won immediately, instead, “That fight will go on down the years. It will be fought in California and in Texas and in every one of our 48 states. It will be fought not only in the United States but in Mexico and in every one of our United Nations.” In this case, the selection of California and Texas was not accidental. He chose the two places where Mexico and the United States were mixing at the fastest rate. Where the future of a racially equal hemispherical liberty would be tested and where—despite Wallace’s positive description—it was presently in jeopardy.

Governor Olson’s August proclamation against employment discrimination directly addressed an issue that affected a number of different minorities. This proclamation was a reverberation of FDR’s Executive Order 8802, stating that any discrimination based on “race, creed, color, or national origin” was “against established public policy.” The California proclamation was similar to 8802 in the sense that it carried no legal weight, only guidelines and a small governing body to investigate reports of discrimination in the workplace. While FDR had his Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), Olson created his own committee in the California Department of Labor. While both FDR’s Executive Order and Olson’s proclamation

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

were far from effective in ending discrimination, both served the purpose of attempting to create wartime unity across all races in the workplace and created bureaucracies with staff capable of implementing ethnic diplomacy. Compared to his contemporary from Texas, Governor Lee O'Daniel, Governor Olson definitely utilized a cultural approach in an effort to improve race relations with Mexico and Mexican-Americans and made a very real effort to promote wartime racial unity. As seen in previous chapter, these types of steps were not seen in Texas until about a year later when cotton growers began pressuring Coke Stevenson for braceros. Generally speaking, Olson's fragile governor's seat combined with his progressive ideals pushed him close to Roosevelt, which helped him preserve a certain level of awareness of national and hemispherical unity in California. On the other hand, Texas Governor Lee O'Daniel was a more conservative Democrat governing a constituency that was less likely to embrace progressivism. These two leaders, while dealing with similar problems, could not have been further apart within the Democratic Party's political spectrum.

Specific complaints of racial prejudice from the State Department—via the Foreign Affairs Department of Mexico—came to Governor Olson just like they did to the Texas Governors. While Olson admittedly saw fewer, but still a significant amount of complaints than O'Daniel, Olson always responded. Olson himself is not remembered as a tactful politician or diplomat, but when cases were passed from the State Department, he asked Earl Warren to follow-up with each individual complaint. As with other areas of Olson's administration, the documents for these specific incidents are not available, but through a comparison with Texas it is still possible to determine Warren's aptitude in quelling racial strife. From both the Mexican and State Department's

perspectives, California's responses in these early years were satisfactory. In Texas, there were multiple examples of Mexico asking for further action from Texas and the State Department was often unsatisfied with Coke Stevenson's inaction. These sorts of complaints do not exist when it comes to California's ethnic diplomacy.<sup>247</sup>

While some of the differences between Texas and California can be attributed to the high level of civil rights activism in Texas and the LULAC alliance with Mexico and the Mexican Consuls; it does not change the fact that Olson was clearly handling the situation more favorably in the eyes of Mexico, the State Department, and the OCIAA. In fact, a March 24, 1941 (prior to Sleepy Lagoon) memorandum from the Mexican Embassy to the State Department helps clarify the differences between O'Daniel and Olson. The memo requested that State Department act against the increasing amounts of discrimination in California and Texas. It specifically requested

the Department of State [to] address the Governors of the States of Texas and California, making them see the urgent necessity of taking measures to avoid the development, in their respective jurisdictions, or any form of hostility against Mexicans or their descendants, to the benefit of the good understanding of the populations of our two countries, which understanding constitutes the fundamental basis of cooperation between the Governments.<sup>248</sup>

In a follow-up memorandum sent to Acting-Secretary Welles, Latin American specialist Herbert Bursley points out that Governor Olson promptly followed up. The Governor agreed to work against discrimination and sent a copy of his draft to Welles in order for the State Department to officially respond. From the very beginning, Olson's California was willing to let the State Department take the lead in their relationship with Mexico. Olson and the State Department both observed that Texas was not on the

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<sup>247</sup> RG 59 Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives.

<sup>248</sup> Memorandum from the Mexican Embassy to the State Department, March 24, 1941. RG 59 Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives

same page. Latin American specialist, Herbert Bursley pointed out “that Governor (O’Daniel) apparently has made some statements favorable to good relations with Mexicans, or at least giving lip service to the cause. However, he (O’Daniel) has not yet replied to our letter of March 27 and his failure to cooperate in the recent Pan American Day celebrations at San Antonio apparently has caused unfavorable impression upon Mexicans....” He goes on to quote Consul General Blocker’s report, which argues that O’Daniel’s failure to attend was “Regrettable, especially in view of the fact that Governor Chávez of Chihuahua gave his wholehearted cooperation to the celebration and went to San Antonio in the understanding that the Governor of Texas would also be in attendance.” In Blocker’s understanding, this was “glaringly impolite.” The State Department at this point in time was just beginning to research and collect information concerning ethnic diplomacy. In the minds of the people who crafted ethnic diplomacy Texas was largely ignoring the issue, but California was willing to follow the direction of Sumner Welles.<sup>249</sup>

The final piece of evidence concerning Olson’s view of Mexico came in 1944. Still being active in politics, Olson attended a key meeting with President Roosevelt as a Democratic National Committee member. During the meeting several points were debated, including FDR pursuing a fourth term. However, as a side note to the newspaper’s chronicling of the event was the statement that “ex-Governor Olson...wanted to become Ambassador to Mexico” in FDR’s fourth term.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> “Results of a Confidential Survey of the Racial Discrimination against Mexican and Latin American Citizens in Texas and New Mexico” February 27, 1942. RG 59, Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives.

<sup>250</sup> Unidentified Newspaper Clipping, “Around Washington.” California Attorney General. Earl Warren Papers: California State Archive File 22:725. Sacramento, CA.



The post-Pearl Harbor era continued relatively peacefully after the Sleepy Lagoon murder from a perspective of Mexico's official complaints. This is due primarily to a change in strategy from Mexico, but from the California perspective fewer complaints was validation that they were doing something correctly.<sup>251</sup> In the election, Earl Warren pulled in 57% of the vote in his 1942 victory and ethnic diplomacy in California transitioned seamlessly to the new administration in January of 1943 where issues were now dealt with by Warren's Attorney General, Democrat Robert W. Kenny. California ethnic diplomacy, in large part due to Warren's hands on role as California's Attorney General, remained unchanged until the Zoot Suit Riots in the spring of 1943.

### **The Zoot Suits Riots and Governor Earl Warren**

The "Zoot Suit Riots" is a reference to two violent clashes between large groups of military personnel and civilian youths, some of whom were donning zoot suits, in Los Angeles. The first, and lesser known incident, occurred in Venice Beach, Los Angeles. For some time before the actual violence, racial tensions were high as some Latino young men walked the boardwalk in their zoot suits four abreast with their arms interlocked. Civilians were concerned about their presence and viewed them negatively. One informant even noted that, "all concerned would make dirty cracks" about the young men in their zoot suits which were deemed unpatriotic.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> This coincides with Mexico's change to a public diplomacy strategy. Instead of pushing via official diplomatic channels, Mexico around the time of the Sleepy Lagoon Trial began to pursue methods which influenced public opinion and media outlets in the United States. This resulted in a closer relationship with equal rights groups such as the Citizen's Committee and LULAC.

<sup>252</sup> Beatrice Griffith, *American Me* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948). as found in Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon : Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.*

A group of Mexican-Americans congregated one Sunday in May for a dance at the Aragon ballroom on Lick Pier and a large crowd gathered outside the building. It began as a group of high school boys who were determined to “straighten things out” and take back the waterfront. Things got a bit more hostile when a few sailors arrived with the false news that a sailor had been stabbed. When the dance ended, the crowd of approximately 500 chased the Mexican-Americans, whether they were wearing zoot suits or not, down the boardwalk yelling things such as, “Let’s get the chili-eating bastards!” The fighting continued through the night, with one particularly violent episode occurring at the end of the pier. Eventually the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), military police, and shore patrol broke up the riot primarily by jailing the Mexican-Americans for their own “protection.”<sup>253</sup>

The violence spread through Los Angeles by the end of the month. Eventually, by June of 1943, military men were ripping zoot-suits off of boys and often beat them with clubs if they failed to cooperate. This violence even moved beyond zoot-suits as the perpetrators targeted anyone who could remotely be associated as a *Pachuco*. The LAPD response was the same as in Venice, jail the Mexican-American (and African-American) victims instead of trying to arrest the servicemen themselves. When the riots finally ended, all levels of government were concerned about whether or not this “race riot”—as Eleanor Roosevelt termed it—could happen again.

Warren’s response to the racial unrest in California was somewhat of a political cliché, he created a committee and put his Attorney General in charge. The committee, known as The Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, sought to “bring

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid, 163-164.

about a better understanding and more cordial relations between our people and all of the Latin Americans, including the People of Mexico.”<sup>254</sup> This was done in conjunction with an Advisory Committee of thirty Mexican leaders and resulted in a vast array of events and programs. The committee created a motion picture film service which created English and Spanish sound tracks and circulated them among imported Mexican labor camps in Southern California. The Council also influenced the Los Angeles School District to expand its adult education programs to include Spanish-speaking Americans. As for events, the Council sponsored a number of conferences. They helped bring Mexico’s foremost architect, Carlos Conreras, to California for a series of conferences and also sponsored a conference on the Vocational Future of Mexican-Americans.

The city and county governments of Los Angeles also stepped up their “good neighbor” appearance. Both the city and county of Los Angeles school systems worked together to create a summer institute called The Mexican Work Shop. This was designed to create more culturally sensitive teachers for schools with large Mexican enrollments. Perhaps more interesting was that the Civil Service Departments of these two government entities initiated a study with the intention of attracting more Mexican-American personnel for public service. Additionally, they created special advisory boards to deal with any future problems involving Mexican-Americans.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Letter to Mr. Manuel Lopez Perez from Robert W. Kenny, California Attorney General. Earl Warren Papers: California State Archive File 204:2576 Again, an activist group borrows the OCIAA jargon which describes relations with Latinos as “Inter-American Affairs.”

<sup>255</sup> Letter to Mr. Carl Mortiz, California Attorney General’s office, from Raymond McKelvey, The Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs.” Earl Warren Papers: California State Archive File 204:2576

News of the Zoot Suit riots was quickly spread in Mexico; however, news of Governor Warren's response was also of interest south of the border. A Mexico D.F. based organization known as *Frente Pro-Aliados* (Pro-Allied Front) served as the Mexican parallel to the Southern-California Council of Inter-American Affairs. It sought "to contribute to the better approachment (sic) and understanding between the Mexican and American people."<sup>256</sup> In November of 1943 the Pro-Allied Front began work on a publication which discussed the treatment of Latin Americans in the United States and emphasized what the authorities in the United States were doing about the problem. The Governor's Office was happy to assist, and forwarded this letter to the California Attorney General's office so he could explain the work of the Southern California Council on Inter-American Affairs in greater detail.

The Coke Stevenson created Good-Neighbor Commission in its infancy realized that California and Texas were experiencing similar problems with racial discrimination; but in Texas, the outcomes were different. The first Executive Secretary of the Commission, Pauline Kibbe, was considering legislation as being an answer and was promoting the Caucasian Equal Rights Bill at the time.. She wrote Earl Warren in an effort to learn more about California's anti-discrimination legislation. Kibbe understood "that California has adopted a law prohibiting discriminatory practices in public places of business and amusement against persons of Mexican extraction, nationals of the other American republics, or Spanish-speaking persons, solely upon the basis of such extraction, nationality or language, and we are greatly interested to know how that law was received by the general public and law enforcement officers, whether or not it has

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<sup>256</sup> Letter to Governor Earl Warren from Lic. Manuel Lopez Perez, *Frente Pro-Aliados*. Earl Warren Papers. California State Archives, File 204:2576.

been successfully applied, and what obstacles were met in securing its enforcement.”<sup>257</sup>

Warren responded through Assistant James H. Oakley. Oakley pointed out that the California Civil Code of 1905 protects the “civil rights of individuals irrespective of race or color and prohibiting under penalty of civil damages.” Code numbers 51 through 54 outline that,

All citizens within the jurisdiction of this state (California) are entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages and privileges of inns, restaurants, hotels, eating houses places where ice cream or soft drink soft drinks of any kind are sold for consumption on the premises, barber shops, bath houses, theaters, skating rinks, public conveyances and all other places of public accommodation or amusement....

For each offense the guilty parties may be held responsible for damages plus one-hundred dollars. He pointed out that these codes had not caused any major disturbances and had received support in the courts.

A major similarity for both Texas and California during World War II was the need for farm laborers. While Texas never achieved adequate relations with Mexico to allow braceros into their state during the war, California also strived to maintain good relations to prevent a ban. Early in 1943, immediately following Warren’s inauguration, the large growers in need of agricultural labor petitioned for assistance. Warren attempted to fix the labor shortages by calling a special joint session of the California Congress. The goal of the session was to deal with the “war farm labor problem.” The legislation that came out of it was known as the Food and Fiber Production Act. A main aspect of this act was the creation of a council that would serve as a liaison to the federal government. The Farm Production Council was born, and Warren assigned highly respected fruit grower Charles C. Teague to run it. The Council helped maximize

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<sup>257</sup> Letter to Governor Earl Warren from Pauline Kibbe, Executive Secretary of the Good Neighbor Commission: Earl Warren Papers. California State Archives, File 204:2576.

laborers and even explored ideas such as utilizing public servants after their work-day hours and student labor during after-school hours. Even these creative solutions were not enough as groups of farmers continually petitioned Warren for more Mexican laborers.<sup>258</sup>

Unfortunately, the Farm Production Council's ability to attain enough workers was complicated by a federal level international conflict concerning the bracero program. About the same time Warren was taking his oaths, Ambassador George Messersmith received instructions from Washington to pursue an expansion to the bracero agreement that would bring Mexican workers to the United States to work in nonagricultural industries (instead of strictly agriculture). After some success in negotiations with the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (SRE), Messersmith returned to Washington briefly. Things quickly turned however, and upon his return he found the bracero program in pieces. The Mexican *Secretario de Agricultura*, Marte Rodolfo Gómez, had long been against the bracero program and thanks to support among other leading Mexican officials was able to suspend the recruitment of Mexican laborers during Messersmith's absence. His main objection was based on the belief that the Mexican agricultural sector could not afford to lose many laborers. Eventually President Camacho and Dr. Padilla intervened, convincing Gómez that wartime cooperation with the United States was of higher importance than a few thousand agricultural laborers. A few years later, Messersmith would finally see success in the expansion of the Bracero Program and under a separate treaty braceros would be utilized in railway construction.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> U.P., "Warren Names Farm Council," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 7 1943.

<sup>259</sup> Driscoll, *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II*.

This brief interruption of the Bracero Program quickly caused farmers in California to panic, fearing they too had received the “Texas Ban” from Mexico. A mere few days later agriculture interest groups had letters sitting on Warren’s desk demanding an answer. Luckily for Warren, he was able to confidently answer that this was not the same situation as in Texas. In fact, Mexico assuaged California’s concerns by directly addressing the issue in California. They blamed the bracero hiatus as a labor shortage in Mexico and clearly delineated that it was not due to any incidents of racial prejudice.<sup>260</sup>

The Bracero Program was also in jeopardy from inside the U.S. capitol building. House Joint Resolution 96, an initiative heavily supported from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, sought to switch control and recruitment of braceros to individual states. The State Department, Mexico, and the California Farm Production council opposed this measure. In the blunt words of Ambassador Messersmith, they felt that “some of the members of Congress and some of the farm people at home think that Mexico is a sort of subject state and that we can come down here and herd labor and bring it into our country, do with it as we please.”<sup>261</sup> Clearly the State Department, the OCIAA, and War Manpower Commission were all extremely opposed to the resolution. Eventually, the State Department even threatened to terminate the Bracero Program completely should the resolution pass. Thankfully for California’s farmers, House Joint Resolution 96 had too much opposition and the Bracero Program remained intact.

In 1943, approximately 45,000 Mexican workers crossed the border into the United States as braceros, over 11 times more than the previous year. The largest

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<sup>260</sup> Multiple letters to Governor Earl Warren. Earl Warren Papers. California State Archives, File 724:22.

<sup>261</sup> Driscoll, *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II*.

share of braceros, 30,000 by Governor Warren's account, worked in California in 1943.<sup>262</sup> While the braceros did not experience a great working environment—either socially or physically—the satisfaction of President Ávila Camacho and Governor Warren was evident by the end of the harvest. Warren earned credit for averting a farm labor crisis and in October of 1943 sent what is best described as a “thank-you note” to Camacho:

I (Earl Warren) make this report to you in acknowledgment of the fact that had it not been for your cooperation and the cooperation of thousands of our neighbors of the Republic of Mexico who came to California to assist us in harvest activities, no such cheering report would have been possible.... Be assured that California is highly appreciative of the fine example of good neighborliness shown us by the splendid citizenry of the Republic of Mexico.

In his response, President Camacho returned the pleasantries:

In a time of mutual sacrifices like that in which we are now living, the help of the Mexican workers sent to the United States of America and in particular to the State of California is one of the most outstanding forms of devotion that animates all the people of my country who are effectively contributing to the common victory of the democracies.... Like fraternity constitutes the best assurance of the spirit of confidence and the friendly reciprocal assistance that will be necessary to adjust permanently the relations of our people.

One telling issue which arose during the 1943 California fall harvest season was a meat shortage. The rationing quotas did not allow for an additional 30,000 agricultural workers in California; therefore the braceros were seeing very limited rations and hardly any meat. As news of this spread, the Farm Labor Council immediately pressed Warren to act. The Governor immediately exchanged a few telegrams with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and had the ration quotas changed to reflect the additional bracero population. His approval reflected his understanding of how important the treatment of braceros was for the good relations with Mexico: “Immediate action in the

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<sup>262</sup> Telegram to James Byrnes, Director of the Office of War Mobilization from Earl Warren. Earl Warren Papers. California State Archives, File 21:711.



removal of meat quota restrictions is necessary to avoid international complications. All California requests is the opportunity to give these workers the fair treatment they deserve by supplying them with sufficient food in proper quantity.”<sup>263</sup> When bad press threatened California’s relationship with Mexico, and in turn California’s agricultural labor supply, Warren proved he would act by giving his support to the Farm Labor Council. From a diplomatic standpoint, the rest of the wartime harvest seasons were equally successful. The governor continued to support the California Farm Labor Council and continued to oversee their primary concerns himself, which is quite telling given his inclination to focus on national issues as part of his aspiration for higher office. The proof of his hands on approach to the issue is possible thanks to quality archival preservation. Warren’s hand written notes on correspondence with the Farm Labor Council are easily identified and his hand writing was confirmed with multiple archivists by the author. Overall, Warren’s diplomacy with Mexico was aligned tightly with the State Department. He inherited a state that attempted to promote good relations and when controversy arose he promoted good relations and successfully kept California open to braceros.

## **So What?**

While the history of California’s ethnic diplomacy is interesting in its own right and reveals information about California during World War II, I believe it provides insight in a broader context—or in other words, answers the question “so what?” Olson and

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<sup>263</sup> Telegram to Marvin Jones, War Food Administration, from Earl Warren. Earl Warren Papers. California State Archives, File 21:711.

Warren's complimentary versions of ethnic diplomacy serve as case-studies in two separate questions: What is a state's ability to create their own diplomacy and when is the U.S. government motivated to act against racial prejudice?

California was less independent than Texas in forging their own diplomatic relationship with Mexico; however, they also were not coerced into a relationship with Mexico via a Bracero Program ban either. Olson and Warren were both conscious of their state's diversity, their role as purveyors of their state's diplomacy with their southern neighbor, and arguable had a stronger concern for national politics given their post-office political aspirations. That being the case, Olson and Warren by considering Mexico while making policy decisions and dealing with racial prejudice showed how a state can serve as a key cog in United States foreign relations. While much of California's ethnic diplomacy was done in conjunction with the State Department, it definitely went beyond simple cooperation. Both governors proved they would make policy decisions in support of ethnic diplomacy without federal intervention. Olson's cultural blitz against discrimination after the Sleepy Lagoon incident was not orchestrated by the State Department and Warren's insistence that the Bracero Program remain in federal hands was something which most agriculturally-based states were opposed. In addition, they did not require the deep level of OCIAA and State Department oversight that was present in bracero banned Texas. The two California Governors also listened when the State Department informed them about racial prejudice incidents and racially centered diplomacy. The extent of their response proves their roles as participants in diplomacy and forgers of California's identity among Mexicans and (perhaps more importantly) Mexican Officials.

Olson and Warren had at least partially different motivations behind their Ethnic Diplomacies. Olson was a self-pronounced progressive and idealist, whom cynics argue had a coat-tail relationship with FDR, and therefore was more likely to follow the federal government's lead in diplomatic affairs. Warren was intimately involved in the policies established by Olson and he was notably more interested in appeasing California farmers as Governor; however, this was done while carefully considering the state's relationship with Mexico. Farmers noted this difference on multiple occasions. One interest group described the lack of support "during Olson's misadministration" to attain Mexican labor as a major obstacle to California agriculture.<sup>264</sup> Warren's inclination to end racial prejudice for moral purposes was less obvious than Olson, but his time later in life as Supreme Court Justice provides ample examples of idealism. Overall, both men had at least some inclination to combat racial prejudice but chose to become more active when additional motivating factors overlapped with their personal preferences. In this way California's policy differed from Texas, which only saw idealism from grass-roots organizations like LULAC, but was similar to the Latin American specialists like Laurence Duggan and Sumner Welles in the State Department.

California, along with Texas, during the 1940s is a good example of the multiple layers that exist within ethnic diplomacy. The racially motivated policies stemmed from more than just the State Department and depended on more than just grass roots activism for motivation. Without the Californian government, the U.S. relationship with Mexico would not have been as sound.

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<sup>264</sup> Letter to Earl Warren from James Mills, Jr. Earl Warren Papers. California State Archives, File 22:724.

## Chapter 5: The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs

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In the most challenging moments of World War II Franklin Delano Roosevelt may not have been as focused on Latin America as other regions of the world; however, he still spent a considerable amount of time thinking about his neighbors to the south. As the German threat grew in Europe, he became intensely focused on the security of the Western Hemisphere. These threats were not merely imagined. Germany was highly invested in Latin America; by the 1930s they had purchased large quantities of Latin American commodities and paid for them with currency that was only accepted in Germany. To protect their interests both before and after the war, Germany had a network of spies in the Caribbean and in other key countries.<sup>265</sup> Furthermore, the large number of German-descent citizens in the Americas was worrisome to the United States as a potential hemispherical “fifth column.” Perhaps most troubling was the memory of the Zimmerman Telegram from the previous World War, it was a known fact that Germany had been urging for Mexico’s support for quite some time. These fears were realized again in the 1930s when German propaganda was discovered in Latin America, which alongside Germany’s increased economic influence in the region represented a significant amount of influence. A large network of German banks, cultural centers, athletic clubs, schools, and community groups attempted to win the hearts and minds of Latin Americans. In addition, well-funded Nazi news agencies produced movies and created radio stations that criticized the United States. The most prevalent Nazi argument against the United States found in Latin America Nazi propaganda is also the most ironic: the U.S.A. was full of racists.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Thomas David Schoonover, *Hitler's Man in Havana : Heinz Lüning and Nazi Espionage in Latin America* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

<sup>266</sup> Thomas M. Leonard and John F. Bratzel, *Latin America during World War II* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Leslie B. Rout and John F. Bratzel, *The Shadow War : German Espionage and United States*

FDR's administration responded to this threat by launching its own public and cultural diplomacy campaigns. During the war, the United States funded extensive campaigns which targeted both the average Latin American citizen and Latin American governments with the goal of improving wartime cooperation, increasing trade, fighting fascism on the home front, reinforcing hemisphere solidarity, and—most importantly for this work—promoting racial equality. These efforts ultimately overshadowed the previously discussed elements of ethnic diplomacy due to the size and scope of the bureaucracy born out of this movement. While this chapter is addressing the breadth of cultural diplomacy during World War II in Latin America, it will emphasize those programs which can be considered part of ethnic diplomacy.

The Nazi propaganda was troubling to U.S. officials and accentuated FDR's concern about securing the Western hemisphere in the face of World War. The United States dedicated considerable resources to ensure the rest of the hemisphere was on its side. This cultural battle for Latin America plays a major role in the United States' goal to limit racial prejudice within its borders and win the support of Latin America for the war. While the State Department and state governments practiced their own cultural diplomacy, other bureaucracies played a more significant role in the promotion of hemispherical unity which eventually included attempts to end prejudice in the United States. The Pan American Union set a precedent in the late nineteenth century as it initiated a modest version of hemispherical cultural diplomacy; however, it was

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*Counterespionage in Latin America during World War II* (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1986). Randall L. Bytwerk, *Bending Spines : The Propagandas of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 2004); Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors : The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). References to German propaganda also found in State Department Records: RG 59 Decimal File 811.4016, National Archives.

eventually replaced under FDR's Good Neighbor Policy by a Cultural Relations Division within the State Department and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). The Cultural Relations Division was ultimately eclipsed by the OCIAA, but throughout their existence cooperated on many of the same projects. The OCIAA was designed with goals far wider than cultural diplomacy, specifically the industrialization and "modernization" for the sake of resource extraction of many Latin American cities and regions; however, the cultural side of the OCIAA proved to be an instrumental piece in successful ethnic diplomacy—addressing the most notable diplomatic concern from Mexico during the war and revealing Latin America's importance to the United States at the time. In terms of the diplomacy of race relations, the following history of the OCIAA and its antecedents reveal a dedication to cultural interchange, education reform, support for minorities, and an attempt to curb racial prejudice against Latin Americans in the United States.

FDR was not the first statesman to consider hemispherical unity. In fact, the U.S. had promoted unity in a somewhat marginalized fashion well before even FDR's distant cousin Theodore held the highest office. The United States was a member of the Pan American Union beginning in 1889. While the Union's level of effectiveness is subject to much scrutiny, by 1939 the Union had built up quite the bureaucratic infrastructure.

Within the Pan American Union were several divisions; most noteworthy for ethnic diplomacy was the Division of Intellectual Cooperation. This division specifically was tasked with the "disseminating of information on American art, education, literature, scientific development, etc." For example, a specialist in education worked for the Division. One of his primary tasks was to index articles "of permanent value on Latin

American education.” His collection was designed to support anyone interested in Latin American education in the United States. Secondly, the education specialist also sought to inform Latin Americans about educational methods within the United States. The Division facilitated numerous professor and student exchanges and also brought together scientists and cultural scholars with comparable interests. The Division boasted an impressive number of publications; however, just like their activities, these were only aimed at people already interested in Latin America—predominantly academics.<sup>267</sup>

Two other Pan American Union Divisions also promoted cultural exchanges. The Columbus Memorial Library in Washington D.C. which shared its books with thirty other Latin American libraries by the end of the 1930s, and the Office of the Counselor which organized four music programs each year where the United States Army, Navy, and Marine bands played Latin American music.<sup>268</sup> The musical performances were held in the Pan American Union building itself and were unfortunately, for the aims of ethnic diplomacy, more popular among Latin Americans who traveled to see the show than the greater Washington D.C. population. The Office of the Counselor also assisted musical artists in their travel to Latin America—and vice versa—but only if they were contacted by the artists themselves beforehand.

The Pan American Union was limited in its scope, operating more as a service than an outreach program. Under FDR's watch, official hemispherical unity and

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<sup>267</sup> National Committee of the United States of America on International Intellectual Cooperation. [from old catalog], *Preliminary Survey of Inter-American Cultural Activities in the United States* (New York City 1939).; Isaac Leon Kandel, National Committee of the United States of America on International Intellectual Cooperation., and Columbia University. Teachers College., *Intellectual Cooperation: National and International* (New York,: Teachers college, Columbia university, 1944).

<sup>268</sup> There is some irony in the fact that the Columbus Memorial Library shared books throughout the Americas. Many Latin Americans, especially native American groups, held (and continue to hold) negative views towards Columbus.



cooperation took several giants steps forward, eventually trying to impact the general populations both above and below the southern border. The first was done within the Department of State. On July 27, 1938, Departmental Order No. 367 created the Division of Cultural Relations of the Department of State. The order deemed its purpose was “to encourage and strengthen cultural relations and intellectual cooperation between the United States and other countries.” The Division was instructed to address all nations, but the first few years of activity were overwhelmingly focused on Latin America. The Division promoted a variety of activities under the “cultural relations” banner, many of which were similar to what the Pan American Union’s Division of Intellectual Cooperation was already doing. In a moment of government-bureaucratic irony, Secretary of State Cordell Hull was technically in charge of both of these partially redundant agencies; unfortunately, prior to late 1941 the only time his name shows up in the documents—revealing his lack of personal involvement—was at the top of both agencies letterhead.<sup>269</sup>

The primary difference with the State Department’s Division versus the Pan American Union’s was authority. The Cultural Relations Division was given authority over “the strengthening of international intellectual and cultural relations.” This included “the preparation and interpretation of treaties in this field.... It drafts and reviews correspondence with foreign governments... and collaborates with the Office of Education and other Government Departments...and Foreign Missions.” Meanwhile,

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<sup>269</sup> Cordell Hull as Secretary of State was automatically the head representative for the United States in the Pan American Union. The Division of Cultural Relations was created by a Departmental Order signed by Hull himself. United States. Office of Inter-American Affairs., *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*.

the Pan American Union had to work within all laws and policies from the State Department or other authorities.<sup>270</sup>

With this increased authority came increased activity. The Division of Cultural Relations was much more active than the Pan American Union's Intellectual Cooperation Division with its promotion of student, teacher, and professor exchanges. This was one of the agreements clearly defined at the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations in Buenos Aires in December 1936. Each of the ratifying countries participated in a professor and graduate student exchange every year, which was funded, for the first few years, by the Cultural Relations Division. This Buenos Aires treaty was the basis for much of the Cultural Relations authority in the late 1930s. The Division also conducted activities similar to the Pan American Union: They embraced music, art, literature, and other intellectual activities and formulated and distributed some representative works (and their translations) in the United States and Latin America. In regards to sharing knowledge, they often promoted book exhibitions. In one instance, they collected over 2,000 book donations from thirty-one different U.S. publishing houses in order to sponsor a traveling book fair across Latin America. When it was over, the books were donated permanently to various libraries. While this kind of pro-active event was a noticeable change from the type of cooperation promoted by the Pan American Union, the first exhibition in Buenos Aires only saw "almost 1,000 persons" attend.<sup>271</sup>

The Division of Cultural Relations was not only more active in the areas that the Intellectual Cooperation Division already operated; they also expanded the scope of

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<sup>270</sup> National Committee of the United States of America on International Intellectual Cooperation. [from old catalog], *Preliminary Survey of Inter-American Cultural Activities in the United States*.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

cooperation. Particularly interesting was the establishment of temporary hospitality centers during the New York and San Francisco Fairs, to welcome distinguished guests. Additionally, they were the first ones to utilize film. They worked with federal film agencies to find appropriate films for display abroad.<sup>272</sup>

While the Division of Cultural Relations was a noteworthy step forward in the Good Neighbor Policy and Hemispherical Cooperation, its impact was still minimal. It did not specifically target the common population, nor did it have any specific purposes beyond promoting unity.

As war looked inevitable, a more thorough approach to hemispherical unity was sought. In June of 1940, FDR forwarded an open memorandum written by Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller to the Secretaries of State, Commerce, Treasury, and Agriculture. This particular note was described as “one of many memoranda” sent on this subject. The message was fairly simple. The U.S. wanted to protect its relationship with Latin America with economic measures that would be “competitively effective against totalitarian techniques.” The memorandum also outlined what became the administration’s new policy towards Latin America; specifically, that the security and economic position of the U.S. in Latin America should be reframed to promote hemispherical interdependence and cooperation. This was to be a full-scale commitment with connections to all Latin American governments and increased economic commitments. The official *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs* states that it was, “to secure raw materials and to aid in maintaining a balance of trade.” More interestingly however for ethnic diplomacy was that the

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<sup>272</sup> National Committee of the United States of America on International Intellectual Cooperation. [from old catalog], *Preliminary Survey of Inter-American Cultural Activities in the United States*.

memorandum also advocated “a vigorous program of educational and cultural relations [that] should be pursued concurrently with the economic program.”

The responsibilities of managing such a large undertaking would be a cooperative effort of both private enterprise and the government; however, the memorandum recommended an advisory committee pulled from the private sector to oversee the process and prevent departmental rivalry. This group would report directly back to the president himself. This memorandum outlined what would become reality shortly thereafter with the creation of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) via Executive Order 8840. Fittingly, Nelson A. Rockefeller was chosen as Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA). Deeper economic connections and a much broader educational and cultural program with Latin America were deemed necessary by Roosevelt, and Rockefeller was his choice to oversee the process.

Interestingly, the earliest title used for the OCIAA was the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics (OCCRBAR). As one reviewer quipped, this would “run high in any list of foolish titles.” Thankfully, the name was changed, but the original name is a telling reminder of its purpose. The first half of these responsibilities, the Commercial Relations, is the more recognizable legacy of the OCIAA. While very little scholarly work has been done on the OCIAA in general, the infamous Gerard Colby Zilg of *Dupont: Behind the Nylon Curtain* fame wrote a condemning account of Nelson Rockefeller. His work, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, argues that the OCIAA was part of a longer imperialist process by the United States government,

working with private U.S. companies, which ultimately oppressed, exploited, and even murdered millions of predominantly indigenous Latin Americans.<sup>273</sup>

Colby's discussion of the OCIAA is interesting. It represents an immense amount of work and provides information that was only uncovered thanks to exhaustive research. Unfortunately, *Thy Will Be Done* is not telling the entire story when it comes to the World War II period. Instead the discussion of the OCIAA is told within a larger neocolonialism lens, arguing that Nelson Rockefeller and some select U.S. private businesses were building an empire with little regard for its impact on anyone outside of their circle. This larger purpose does not allow it to appreciate the important changes that occurred within U.S.-Latin American relations under the Good Neighbor Policy and more specifically World War II. This missing context is troubling. The authors frame the OCIAA within the context of Nelson's past experience with Native Americans. It begins with an introduction to Rockefeller's lack of attention to Native Americans in 1940. He cites two examples, one where FDR "ordered him to stop stalling" to arrange federal funding for the new National Indian Institute in 1940 and another where the same attitude is assumed for support of a nutrition study for the Otomi (a Mexican indigenous group). Unfortunately no footnote is provided on the latter. This information by itself is indeed interesting about Rockefeller, but it leads to an unfair conclusion. The next lines state that "only public pressure and presidential intervention turned Rockefeller around [on native Americans]. Rockefeller's interest in Indians was expedient. He was

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<sup>273</sup> Gerard Colby, who dropped the Zilg surname in Gerard Colby and Charlotte Dennett, *Thy Will Be Done : the Conquest of the Amazon : Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1995). , created quite the stir in his harsh indictment of DuPont. However, copies of his manuscript were attained by the DuPont company prior to printing. The company, upset with the negative press, pressured the publisher to reduce the number of copies on first print by threatening pulling out their substantial advertising dollars if no action was taken. The publisher acquiesced which led to legal action from Colby who cited breach of contract. Ultimately the case ended up in a federal appeals court where Colby was defeated. In *Thy Will Be Done*, Colby partnered with his wife, investigative journalist Charlotte Dennett.

primarily concerned with extracting the minerals and natural resources from Latin America needed by the U.S. war machine.” While both of these statements can be debated, they are sweeping generalizations that are not telling the full story of the OCIAA. Colby ignores the larger picture of the Coordinator Office, the chain-of-command, the organizational timeline, and perhaps most importantly, the governments of these Latin American nations themselves. In addition, all non-economic policies of the OCIAA, that are mentioned later on, are assumed to be a front for the economic and physical abuse suffered in the Amazon. While the U.S. economic empire in Latin America was undoubtedly boosted by World War II, the cultural relations of the OCIAA are too easily dismissed and the benefits among the upper class in Latin America are not addressed.<sup>274</sup> One staff member’s memory sets up an interesting dilemma for Colby’s work when he is forced to confront the cultural relations side of the OCIAA:

Most problems,” one OCIAA staff member remembered, “were approached from a business point of view first. They reflected a viewpoint...that you mustn’t do anything to disturb business. Whenever anybody had a new idea, Rockefeller’s first reaction was to ask whether it would hurt business—not his own personal business mind you, but the business community generally. Only Pearl Harbor changed all that.”<sup>275</sup>

Colby dismisses the possibility that the OCIAA changed after Pearl Harbor. He admits that the OCIAA after Pearl Harbor “Became one of the largest and most glamorous bureaucracies in Washington, with art exhibits, university professors, dancers, singers, and authors touring in almost every country in the hemisphere, coordinated by branch offices in every U.S. embassy in Latin America.” However, he believes that the budget for these programs was suspiciously high and that it had to

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Joe Alex Morris, *Nelson Rockefeller* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), p 137, as quoted in Colby, *Thy Will Be Done*, p 115.

have a “hidden economic agenda.” He then goes on to point out that the commercial committees of the OCIAA were filled with industry titans. In reality, the OCIAA was simply engaging in ethnic diplomacy alongside the economic mission. In fact, the Pearl Harbor statement corresponds with the State Department policy shift discussed in chapter three. Colby and Dennett got so caught up in the larger story of North American imperialism in Latin America that they missed the fact that the OCIAA, despite all of its faults and abuses, also represented a shift in U.S.-Latin American relations. Ultimately, depending on what page the reader is on, they are treated with historical silver, plastic, or both; the book is valuable and limited at the same time.

That being said, Colby’s neo-colonialist lens is not an unfair treatment. The economic goals of the OCIAA, as defined by the OCIAA itself, were five-fold:

1. Extending financial aid to the American republics to...preserve internal stability.
2. Reducing foreign exchange requirements of the American republics by adjusting their external debt services to accord with their capacity to pay, until developmental activity can be undertaken which will increase their ability to meet old and new financial obligations
3. ...stimulate commerce between the Republics, develop their resources, and assist desirable advances in their industrialization.
4. Securing adequate provision for transportation facilities and adding to these as conditions warrant.
5. Harmonizing the personnel and advertising policies of Latin American branches and agencies of the United States concerned with the objectives of Hemisphere defense.<sup>276</sup>

These objectives parallel what many scholars have defined as Modernization Theory. In this twentieth century iteration, the U.S. attempted to democratize and industrialize Latin America from the top down.<sup>277</sup> This hegemonic mindset coupled with

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<sup>276</sup> United States. Office of Inter-American Affairs., *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*. p. 11. This report was by request of FDR and was later admitted to being “to a certain extent a recapitulation of activities already started.”

<sup>277</sup> For more on Modernization Theory see Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man; the Social Bases of Politics*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960); David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of

the central priority of winning the war led to immense investments and U.S. supported development of industry in Latin America. In the first six months of the OCIAA's existence alone, \$165 million in funds were made available as credit to Latin American nations.

However, the U.S. economic involvement did not simply stop at investments. After the initial splash of foreign capital, the OCIAA's next major economic task was to support the struggling export-driven Latin American economies which lost approximately 40% of their normal export market from the Nazi blockade of Western Europe. The OCIAA, in conjunction with FDR, his Cabinet, the Advisory Committee of the Council of National Defense, felt that this reality represented a "grave danger that in some of these countries economic and political deterioration may proceed to a point where defense of the western hemisphere would be rendered much more difficult and costly."<sup>278</sup> The solution they offered was to purchase as many commodities from Latin America as possible, specifically mentioning hides, wool, nitrates, manganese, tin, and "numerous other commodities." This gave the U.S. substantial economic power and political influence in the region, but also gave the export-led focused governments of Latin America the trading partner they desperately needed. While the U.S. was reestablishing its economic and political control of the Western Hemisphere, it was largely done with the blessings of the conservative governments of Latin America and done with a parallel goal of promoting hemispherical security and cooperation.

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Chicago Press, 1965); *Rethinking Development : Modernization, Dependency, and Postmodern Politics* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1987).

<sup>278</sup> United States. *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*, 1947. The Advisory Committee of the Council of National Defense was created originally during World War I and consisted of businessmen who were considered to be experts in various sectors of the industrial economy.



One telling feature of this economic relationship concerns the availability of crucial materials to Latin America itself. The neocolonial relationship described by Colby is convincing; however, it does not fully explain the reinvestment back into Latin America during the war. First, the OCIAA loans were renewed or expanded every year during World War II. More tellingly, however, was the distribution of essential war materials such as tin or rubber and a variety of consumer goods. Many of these things were extremely scarce during the war; nevertheless, the OCIAA with the direct help of President Roosevelt made a point in April of 1941 to ensure that the Latin American Republics received a share of the strategic materials and consumer goods in order to ensure a strong hemispherical defense and continued industrialization.<sup>279</sup>

As time went on, the OCIAA commercial activities covered a broader spectrum. In 1942 they teamed with the Radio Division to promote advertising and radio propaganda. The final result was near blanket coverage with long range radio signals, making a major effort against the Nazi radio programming found throughout the region. In addition, a few narrow projects were added to the OCIAA portfolio.<sup>280</sup> After Pearl Harbor, the projects included things like a partnership with the Office of Price Administration to regulate price controls and rationing and a special joint economic cooperation committee with the Mexican Government to maximize industrialization,

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<sup>279</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt to William S. Knudsen, April 5, 1941. Copies of this letter are in OCIAA files. This letter is said to have been written without prior notification to the Department of State.

<sup>280</sup> The first special project was created before Pearl Harbor and is the primary focus of *Thy Will Be Done*—a development plan for the Amazon Basin. This plan was a cooperative project with the conservative Brazilian government to procure “strategic materials.” It included a large amount of experts sent from the United States and eventually became its own entity: the Institute of Inter-American Affairs, which misleadingly titled this project the Health and Sanitation program.

public works projects, efficient use of equipment and the cutting of bureaucratic red tape.

As the previously cited OCIAA staff member said himself, things changed after Pearl Harbor. But to be fair, the vast majority of the OCIAA's economic policies were set in motion prior to December 7, 1941. After Pearl Harbor, while these investments continued, most new programs and policies—albeit not dollars—were cultural, emphasizing the secondary mission in Rockefeller's letter.

Some scholarly work has been done on the secondary mission, improving education and cultural relations. The most comprehensive studies are Darlene Sadlier's *Americans All* and Justin Hart's *Empire of Ideas*. Sadlier studies the OCIAA under the terms of Joseph S. Nye's definition of cultural diplomacy as "soft power" and Hart emphasizes the U.S.'s manufacturing of its image using public diplomacy.<sup>281</sup> The most well-known of this cultural emphasis are the films, radio, and goodwill missions that traveled across Latin America. Perhaps the most effective cultural tool implemented by the OCIAA into Latin America was in the area of media. Film was the most memorable medium to come out of the OCIAA's cultural diplomacy. As Nelson Rockefeller wrote to John Whitney on May 1, 1942,

Of the three arms of psychological warfare—radio, news, and movies—the latter, from my point of view, has by far the greatest potentialities as it combines the impact of sight and sound....[The Film industry] stands ready to produce the most potent instrument of war possessed by any nation in the world.<sup>282</sup>

The Motion Picture Society for the Americas (MPSA), created with the urging of

Nelson Rockefeller, opted to change the course of Hollywood's portrayal of Latin

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<sup>281</sup> Darlene J. Sadlier, *Americans All : Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in World War II*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012); Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas : the Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>282</sup> Nelson A. Rockefeller to John Hay Whitney, May 1, 1942 as found in Sadlier, *Americans All : Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in World War II*. p. 37.

Americans. Previously, Hollywood had stereotyped Latin Americans only as a wild revolutionaries, tango dancers, jungle dwelling savages, or sensual Caribbean beach dwellers.<sup>283</sup> The MPSA decided to emphasize a new stereotype, one that emphasized modernization and the white middle class. This decision was at least partially made to appeal to the ruling governments of Latin America which controlled the regional distribution of these films.<sup>284</sup> Ultimately this produced a fair number of forgettable films

featuring Latin Americans. Despite the lack of popularity of films such as *Underground Agent*, *Now Voyager*, Latin American culture did manifest itself in other ways. For instance, in Alfred Hitchcock's *Notorious*, the MPSA convinced the filmmakers to feature Rio de Janeiro in the film. In addition, a number of films featured an orchestra led by Cuban Xavier Cugat. Even though the Latin American presence in wartime Hollywood is telling, perhaps the more interesting aspect



Archivo de Universidad Autónoma de Nueva León.  
Monterrey, Nueva León, Mexico

<sup>283</sup> Alfred Charles Richard, *Censorship and Hollywood's Hispanic Image : an Interpretive Filmography, 1936-1955* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993).

<sup>284</sup> Brian O'Neill, "The Demands of Authenticity: Addison Durland and Hollywood's Latin Images during World War II," in *Classic Hollywood, Classic Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). Sadler, *Americans All*, 2012.

of these films was the power given to the respective featured Latin American governments. Latin American leaders often criticized the films for cultural inaccuracies or what they felt was misrepresentations. For example, Brazil's assistant director of *Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda* (DIP), Asis de Figueiredo, complained about a supposed "Brazilian" chauffeur in *Now, Voyager* that was played by an Italian actor who spoke Spanish and drove a beat up vehicle. In his opinion, the modern nation of Brazil should not be represented with this image.<sup>285</sup>

Print was another key element to the OCIAA's cultural diplomacy. Under the Information Division, the OCIAA Press cooperated with presses in 19 Latin American countries and boasted an impressive list of 1,267 different newspapers and magazines printed each day. Just like Disney's feature films, Mexico and Brazil were the primary emphasis with 210 and 422 respectively. In addition, the OCIAA even published its own monthly magazine, *En Guardia* (On Guard) which was distributing 80,000 copies a month by mid-1941. Interestingly, the Nazi propaganda forces fought *En Guardia* in a very literal sense when they published *De Guardia*, designed to appear similar to *En Guardia* but propagate Nazi information into Latin America.<sup>286</sup> In 1944 it became its own Division, known as Press and Publication.

Of all the documents to survive from World War II in Mexico, various archives have a notably large number of these OCIAA documents. The magazine *Vigía*, translated as Watch or Watchtower, is one example.<sup>287</sup> The monthly magazine served as both a news source and opinion piece about predominantly international events, but

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<sup>285</sup> March 26, 1941, report by Bruno Cheli., RG 229, Motion Picture Division, Box 214. National Archives, Washington D.C. Sadler, *Americans All*, 2012

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> This magazine shares a name with a well-known Jehovah Witness publication, but has no relation.

it also included a brief section in English on the last page. The contents covered a broad range of topics, but always contained pro-allied content. One great and fairly subtle example is an article which was accompanied with this map. The map informs the readers of the state of Europe in May of 1944. The article however was not about recent events; it was actually a historical piece. The story was a favorable biography of Luis Bríon, a Dutchman who fought with Simon Bolívar and supported Gran Colombia.

The opening line is quite revealing:

In Caracas, near the final resting place of the Great Liberator, lies the mortal remains of another extraordinary man, whose memory has been forgotten by time. There was a time when the letters of his name made syllables, and these ran as words through the mouths of people throughout not only the Americas, but also those beyond the sea, all the way to Europe.

The story does not end here. Bríon is remembered fondly for his contributions to the army, but is also specifically recognized for the fact that he borrowed from creditors in New York, London, and Amsterdam to arm the Liberating army against the Spanish, three cities that represented resistance to the Nazis despite the fact that the Dutch royal family was in exile at the time. With the map looking at the reader on the opposite page, the insinuation of the past being connected to the present circumstances is more than subtle. Other *Vigía* articles were even more obvious in their support for the allied effort. Some even argued that the allies were fighting for racial equality, while Hitler promoted racism in *Mein Kampf*.<sup>288</sup>

The well-funded radio division was perhaps the most impressive cultural diplomacy effort of the OCIAA. It was designed to compete with Axis Radio and British Radio, both of which were more ubiquitous in Latin America than U.S. radio stations at the onset of World War II. Fred Fejes's *Imperialism, Media, and the Good Neighbor*:

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<sup>288</sup> Archivo de Universidad Autónoma de Nueva León. Monterrey, Nueva León, Mexico.

*New Deal Foreign Policy and United States Shortwave Broadcasting to Latin America*

details how Rockefeller brought together NBC, CBS, and a few other networks to form a united front for the Radio division. They created their own short-wave stations emanating from New York City, San Francisco, Boston, Cincinnati, and Schenectady. In addition, they bought time on local channels for their programming, sent transcripts to be read on other stations, and made new programs using Latin-American consultants. They then utilized local coordinating committees in key Latin American cities to support their local radio and promote their new programming. This often included the hiring of prominent local radio figures. The scriptwriters for these programs were closely supervised by the OCIAA. They were given directives that were created by State Department and OCIAA staff members. Oftentimes the on-air personalities just read scripts handed to them by the state department or OCIAA verbatim. The content of the radio broadcasting was diverse. They featured regular news updates, music programs, drama shows, and serial features such as *“Estamos En Guerra,”* which focused on specific aspects of the war. Notably, the OCIAA programs had a directive (Operating Procedure Directive No. 3, December 16, 1942) which forbade sponsorship of advertisers. The idea was to keep their propaganda campaign pure and prevent their media outlets from being associated with businesses in the U.S. or even Latin America.<sup>289</sup>

The OCIAA also practiced person-to-person cultural diplomacy. Working in conjunction with the State Department, numerous United States personalities and industry leaders toured their way across Latin America, predominantly South America,

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<sup>289</sup> United States. Office of Inter-American Affairs., *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*; Fred Fejes, *Imperialism, Media, and the Good Neighbor : New Deal Foreign Policy and United States Shortwave Broadcasting to Latin America* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Pub. Corp., 1986).

in the hopes of improving U.S.-Latin American understanding. These “missions” as they came to be called were initially dramatic failures. The early films taken to South America typically reflected drastic cultural misunderstandings and contained a variety of different Spanish or Portuguese dialects, making little sense to the native viewers. One of the OCIAA’s Motion Picture Subcommittees in Buenos Aires telegraphed, “STOP SUCH PICTURES. OR AT LEAST CHECK THEM VERY CAREFULLY, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.” Brazil’s foreign minister, Oswaldo Aranha, outlined the Brazilian opinion even more clearly, “The next good-will mission that arrives in Rio, Brazil will declare war on the United States.” Thankfully, the cultural missions eventually turned around with Walt Disney in 1942. Multi-millionaire and Vice President of the Museum of Modern Art in New York John Hay Whitney struck a deal with Walt Disney to create a series of animated shorts on behalf of better hemispherical relations. Disney decided that in order to do a thorough job, and avoid the problems of his predecessors, he would need to take a team to South America—nicknamed *El Grupo*. The trip became the topic of a documentary released in 1943 called *South of the Border with Disney*. The shorts were combined into a box-office hit feature film, *Saludos Amigos* (1942)—and remains a cult favorite among Disney animation aficionados today for being the first feature film appearance of Donald Duck and Goofy. The film held its premier in Rio de Janeiro, a first for Hollywood, and then hit other major cities in Latin America, appearing in the U.S. five months later. While Disney’s film did catch some criticism from Latin Americans, Disney and *El Grupo* cooperated and listened to Brazilian artists and leaders during their trip, making an overall significantly better received final product than the OCIAA’s previous film sponsorships.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> J.B. Kaufman, *South of the Border with Disney: Walt Disney and the Good Neighbor Program, 1941-1948* (New

In total, the OCIAA was responsible for a complete media blitz across Latin America. While the majority of the hemispherical solidarity content was focused on the urban population, the blanket radio coverage ensured it reached the majority of Latin Americans—with the notable exception of non-Spanish speaking populations. The results are hard to measure, but its long term impact on Latin American culture is not. The propaganda campaign is a great example of cultural globalization and the power of the media. While obviously the cultural interchange between the American Republics has skyrocketed alongside technology since the 1940s, the OCIAA left the first widespread cultural imprint across Latin American history.

The OCIAA had another cultural mission beyond that of the mass media that has not been previously studied nor was even specifically mentioned in Rockefeller's initial memorandum. The OCIAA wanted to improve the understanding of Latin American countries *in the United States* and help combat racial prejudice *in the United States*—making the OCIAA an essential component to ethnic diplomacy in more ways than one.

Rockefeller's organization always understood that better hemispherical relations were a two way street. Rockefeller himself realized this point and publically advocated this cause in an April 1, 1941 press release. He began with four fairly ambitious goals:

“First: ...as a permanent extension of the Good Neighbor program to stimulate a general movement for popular education about Central and South America in every community in this country.... Second: We should have a concerted community action to provide for the study of Spanish and Portuguese in schools and in classes established for adults. Third: We need concerted community action to increase purchases of products imported from the other American Republics and Fourth: It would be most helpful to have concerted action among women's and other organizations to provide suitable hospitality for visitors and to



establish direct and friendly contacts with similar groups and organizations in the other American Republics.”<sup>291</sup>

While the rhetoric began in the spring, there was limited effort at this early point. The State Department’s Cultural Relations Division was still the only encompassing organization in place until after Pearl Harbor, this change in policy, the creation of an organization designed to impact the U.S. population’s perception of Latin Americans, mirrored the State Department’s own change in policy after December 7, 1941. Not wasting any time, on December 8 the Rockefeller selected Walter Laves from the University of Chicago, and formerly of the League of Nations Association, to head an inter-American education program for the United States.<sup>292</sup> This became a formal part of the OCIAA in March of 1942 when his group became known as the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States. Before his appointment, Laves realized that his success (much like the success of the entire OCIAA) would depend on his relationship with other organizations and offices. He drew a diagram revealing his ideas for the future division. He emphasized the importance of the media, the Office of Facts and Figures, the Office of Civilian Defense, and the Coordinator of Information as instrumental to his success.

Once Laves’ group became an official division, it operated with three sections: the Civics Organization Section, which worked in public education and information, the Hospitality Organization Section, which welcomed visiting Latin American officials and dignitaries, and the Lectures and Materials Section which compiled sources for

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<sup>291</sup> United States. Office of Inter-American Affairs., *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*.

<sup>292</sup> The League of Nations Association was originally The American Association for International Cooperation. It merged with the League of Nations Non-Partisan Committee on January 10, 1923 to become the League of Nations Non-Partisan Association. This name was shortened in 1929 to become the League of Nations Association. Generally speaking it was a pro-internationalist group especially active in the Northeastern United States, holding events such as public debates to gain support for a more internationally minded United States.

promoting Latin America within U.S. education. However, in May 1942 the OCIAA Bureau of the Budget decided that the OCIAA was not needed in the United States and cut back its budget so it could only “stimulate” the population rather than create significant programs. Fortunately, this budget freeze was extremely short lived as the increased tension from Texas and (especially) the Sleepy Lagoon Trial in California led to the approval of a 50% increase in funding from the original mark.<sup>293</sup>

The focus of the reinvigorated division was on three projects: Inter-American centers built across the country, including a center in Washington D.C. predominantly used for housing Latin American guests, a series of traveling exhibits promoting inter-American affairs, and a “Spanish-Speaking Minority Project.” The centers, influenced by the San Francisco and New York Fair’s reception centers of the Cultural Relations Division, were the initial focal point and took the lion’s share of the budget. By 1944 there were centers in Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Denver, Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, Memphis, Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Cleveland, Akron, Pittsburgh, Chapel Hill, Philadelphia, Hartford, Providence, and Boston. Additionally, more centers were planned for San Francisco, San Antonio, Houston, New Orleans, Birmingham, Atlanta, and Louisville.<sup>294</sup> Besides the initial centers, the first six months saw a flurry of special projects which included forums, conferences, and study groups that were organized by “several hundred” community groups in “most states of the country” and financially sponsored by the Division.<sup>295</sup> Perhaps most interesting was the center in Washington D.C., which reveals a much deeper problem. Non-white visiting dignitaries often had

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid. Laves and the Division’s role in the Sleepy Lagoon trial is discussed in chapter four.

<sup>294</sup> Department of Special Services “Centers and Areas Served As of September 1944.” OCIAA Graphic Reports September 1944.

<sup>295</sup> United States. Office of Inter-American Affairs., *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*.

trouble finding lodging in the segregated, southern city that Washington D.C. still was in the 1940s. The United States understanding of race of white or non-white did not match the more narrow racial categories of Latin America. As evidenced by the Mexican government's complaints to the State Department, the visiting officials ran into this problem in the American Southwest and at times in the capital. This center gave the OCIAA a place to organize activities in the D.C. area, but more importantly solved a potentially embarrassing problem. This became even more apparent when the OCIAA added more "reception centers" to care for visitors from other American republics.<sup>296</sup>

These reception centers were part of the Inter-American Travelers' Index and Reception Section and worked closely with the Department of State. The two main branches and "reception centers" were in Miami and New York City (although eventually the San Francisco center, known as the Pacific House also became quite active). Beginning in 1943, these centers served as the entry point for all official visitors arriving from Latin America and were purposely built in the major ports of entry for Latin American immigrants. With close cooperation from the military, Department of State, and the Cultural Relations Division of the OCIAA, these dignitaries were channeled to their respective destinations and all their travel plans were arranged on their behalf. Railroad and airplane tickets were provided and interpreters were made available to accompany them throughout their entire trip. In addition, they would book hotel accommodations, provide tour guides, and arrange for official entertainment. The OCIAA, and really the entire US government, benefited from this travel planning as they

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., p 107.

were able to track the daily itineraries of the Latin American visitors and assist with “any particular problems which might arise.”<sup>297</sup>

The centers themselves were operated by volunteer organizations, each producing their own pro-hemispherical cooperation/pro-Latin American culture materials and events. A surviving pamphlet from 1945 entitled *Some Specific Suggestions for Inter-American Programs* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) gives some examples of recommended activities: Celebrating Latin American independence days, Pan-American Day, Flag Day, showing slides and films, concerts, musical competitions, language classes in both Spanish and Portuguese.<sup>298</sup>

Pan-American Day was the centers’ most consistently celebrated event. A 324 page book entitled *Pan-American Day: An Anthology of the Best Prose and Verse on Pan Americanism and the Good Neighbor Policy* was produced to accompany Pan-American Day celebrations in 1943. The book has some interesting aspects that reveal even more about the nature of ethnic diplomacy in the OCIAA. It contained five sections: “Poetry and Prose,” “History and Ideals of Pan-Americanism,” “Anecdotes—Legends—Stories,” “Speeches and Sayings,” and “Plays, a Pageant, and Program Material.” The book’s introduction, penned by World War I veteran, cellist, and author Robert Haven Schauffler, explains that while the holiday was created in 1890, the U.S. had not celebrated it until 1931. On the day itself, all government buildings were beflagged and schools, civic organizations, and citizens in general were encouraged to partake in ceremonies “that express our cordial feeling of friendship for all our sister

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid. p 109.

<sup>298</sup> Sadlier, *Americans All*, 2012.

American republics, and for the ideal of continental solidarity.”<sup>299</sup> Under FDR’s administration, Pan-American Day “has now come to be a highly important and significant occasion.... With each of the United States whole-heartedly behind the Good Neighbor movement, our schools are going in in a large way for study of the other American republics, their history, ideals, national heroes, folk-lore, customs, costumes, etc.”<sup>300</sup>

One of the primary themes emphasized in the celebration of Pan-American Day was the legacy of Simón Bolívar as the original Pan-American. A passage by Joseph Byrne Lockey, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) History Professor of Latin America, was provided as a quotable passage on the topic. Lockey wrote:

What can America do to promote world unity? It can first of all effect its own unification. Fortunately, no insuperable obstacles lie in the path. Bolívar, the torch, pointed the way more than a hundred years ago. His light has not gone out. It shines more and more resplendently as the years go by. It is the symbol of American unity. It is at a point about which the nations of American can rally. Let them rally. Let them achieve Bolívar’s ideal. Let them provide a model for the other great regions of the earth. Let these emulate the American example. Let Europe federate. Let the other regional unities be established. Then perhaps the world can unite. If that day comes, it may not be too much to call Bolívar the providence of the two hemispheres.

As previously shown with FDR’s selective memory of Woodrow Wilson’s foreign relations with Latin America, U.S. leaders have often used a selective history in an effort to paint the United States and Latin America as having a more positive shared history. Even as recently as President George W. Bush’s Pan-American Day Proclamation, this extremely selective history and manipulation of Bolívar’s memory has been utilized. In his speech Bush argued that “The United States and our neighboring countries in the

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<sup>299</sup> Hilah Paulmier and Robert Haven Schauflier, *Pan-American Day; an Anthology of the Best Prose and Verse on Pan Americanism and the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: Dodd, Mead & company, 1943).

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

Western Hemisphere have a long history of cooperation. Simon Bolivar (sic) first convened the Congress of Panama in 1826 with the intention of creating an association of states in the hemisphere. In 1890, a Pan American conference established the International Union of American Republics.”<sup>301</sup>

Pan-American Day was designed to celebrate this selective shared history and promote Latin American culture and history. Perhaps most revealing of this new philosophy are the play scripts created by the OCIAA to help celebrate the holiday. The most compelling script was a recreation of a conversation between Eleanor Roosevelt and Nelson Rockefeller and is designed to be played by a boy and a girl impersonating the First Lady and the CIAA. This excerpt reveals the ideology behind it:

Mrs. Roosevelt: I should like to ask you, Mr. Rockefeller, do you believe that we can achieve hemisphere solidarity?

Mr. Rockefeller: Absolutely! There’s no question in my mind but that we can achieve it if we have the idea that solidarity means uniformity. We in this hemisphere are 21 different republics. We have different histories—all of them exciting—but we have the common history of hatred of oppression and love for freedom and independence. We have different cultures, but each of our countries can find in all the others much that is inspiring. We have different resources, but our resources can supplement and benefit one another.

Mrs. Roosevelt: That is very important for all of us to understand. After all, what we are defending is the right of every country to work out its destiny in its own way, to live in peace and security, and to have access to the good things of life. It is that right of peoples which Hitler seeks to destroy. You have confirmed my confidence that the countries of this hemisphere will never submit to foreign domination. Certainly all the varying peoples of this half of the world have the common heritage of resistance to any threat against our freedom and to any external domination.

The centers and the Division as a whole were also effective in convincing merchants to assist in their mission. Businesses across the country were convinced to

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<sup>301</sup> Joseph Byrne Lockey, “Bolivar, the Torch, Pointed the Way to World Unity.” as found in Paulmier and Schauffler, *Pan-American Day; an Anthology of the Best Prose and Verse on Pan Americanism and the Good Neighbor Policy*. 1943.

sell Latin American goods. The commercial influence represents an interesting parallel to the entire OCIAA—where private enterprise partnered with government to achieve their goals. Each of the 48 States had grass root organizations aided and supported by the Division.

Shortly after the Division of Inter-American Affairs was given back its funding, Rockefeller increased its importance via a departmental reorganization and more staffing. In February of 1943 the Division was placed underneath the Department of Information Services. The Division of Inter-American Affairs in the United States was broken up into four sections: the Inter-American Centers Section, Major Key Groups Section, the Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section, and the Speakers Service Bureau Section.

The creation of the Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section is an important step in the practice of ethnic diplomacy. Even before the reorganization, this section existed in a more unofficial format. In April of 1942, concurrent with the State Department's own policy changes, Labor Economist David J. Saposs completed his report for Laves called "Resident Latin American Problems and Recommended Program."<sup>302</sup> The report was a scathing analysis of the discrimination and inequality seen across the Southwest. Employment discrimination, illiteracy, inadequate housing, malnutrition, and segregation in schools and public places were all commonplace. Saposs guessed that the population was approximately 3.5 million which could either hinder the home front or support it with their labor. His suggestions to improve racial relations were to open up support centers for victims of racial prejudice and educate

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<sup>302</sup> The implications of this report for the State Department is discussed in chapter two.

non-Hispanic citizens in order to end “racist attitudes and practices.”<sup>303</sup> Ultimately Laves and his other department heads agreed with the findings in the Saposs Report. They established a committee to attempt to coordinate any and all agencies involved with this group of Americans. Their primary responsibility was to improve the attitude toward Latin Americans by working with key groups across the United States. In the reorganization the committee became its own section officially and Saposs was tabbed as director. Some of their earliest activities were aimed at supporting talented Hispanic High School students with scholarships for college. Laves gave the section an annual budget of \$150,000; which was largely spent on these scholarships, community centers, Latin American holiday celebrations, such as the *Tucson Alianza para Victoria* celebration, and media programming. Most importantly, as already discussed, the Cultural Centers became the centerpiece of the Division in 1943.

Less than a year later, corresponding with the increased racial turmoil across the nation, the Division of Inter-American Activities officially was upgraded to be its own Department, signifying its growing importance. In October 1944 the new Department was renamed with the more generic title Department of Special Services. It kept the old responsibilities but added a Labor Relations Division. The Department continued in this capacity through the end of 1945. The *U.S. Government Manual* from September states that the Special Services Unit, minus the newer Labor Relations Division, was to be terminated.

While the budget of the Department of Inter-American Affairs in the United States reveals where the money was funneled, the above listed projects, cultural diplomacy

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<sup>303</sup> Saposs Report. Facts and Figures Division. RG 229, Records of the Department of Press and Publication, Box 1460 NARA II; Sadlier, *Americans All*, 2012.



often can be successful with less funding. The written word and education proved to be the newly formed department's greatest tool. The Division of Education and Teacher's Aid focused on the training and preparation of teachers, the development and distribution of educational material, and the encouragement and assistance for the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese. One instrumental aspect of teacher training was the "Inter-American Workshops." These programs, often created in conjunction with Latin American specialists from across the nation's universities and colleges, were designed for the training of primary and secondary school teachers. These workshops lasted between 2 and 6 weeks. *Fellow Americans* was one of these workshops, designed as a fourth grade curriculum unit on Brazil with an emphasis on the region surrounding the Amazon River. The workshop was conducted in Louisville, Kentucky, but the documentation was accessible nationally.

Another example with surviving documentation is Grace Thompson Pugh's *Mexican Folk Dances* from 1944. Pugh's workshop was designed to be educational and entertaining. On the education side of the workshop, she emphasized the link between Mexican Folk Dances and Mexican history, explaining in detail how Mexican Folk dances each have a unique meaning and cultural significance. In her guide, Pugh argued that "In no other American country is the present so rooted in the past as in Mexico."<sup>304</sup> The workshop also featured demonstrations of these traditional dances. These included such dances as *Los Voladores* (Dance of the Flying Pole) and *La Danza de las Plumas* (The Dance of the Conquest). A deep analysis of the more

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<sup>304</sup> Grace Thompson Pugh and Southwest Texas State Teachers College., *Mexican Folk Dances. Workshop in Inter-American Education, Summer Session, 1944, Southwest Texas State Teachers College, San Marcos, Texas, in Cooperation with Office of Inter-American Affairs* (New York,: Curriculum Service Bureau for International Studies, 1944).

questionable elements of Mexican history was avoided. For example, *La Danza de las Plumas* invokes the potentially controversial history of the Spanish Conquest. Pugh's comment on this particular topic is quite telling. She comments that the "Indians dance happily the story of their own defeat."<sup>305</sup> Since her audience was U.S. citizens, this offensive interpretation of *La Danza de las Plumas* reinforced good feelings rather than create cultural conflict. While attempting to avoid controversy, she also reinforced the ethnic diplomacy messages of Good Neighborism and Hemispherical Solidarity. She closed her pamphlet by stating that "To understand Mexican dances is to understand Mexico; and understanding is the necessary basis for the neighborliness and friendship which we so earnestly desire."<sup>306</sup>

As part of this educational effort, the Department also created the Curriculum Service Bureau for International Studies. The OCIAA used the Bureau to publish teaching resources, workshop pamphlets, and full curriculums that promoted Latin American education. These included *Inter-American Education in Our Schools* by Marie R. Madden, which was a curriculum for New York area schools and included about 50 pages in teaching aids, *Source Materials for the Correlation of Mexican Music with our Secondary School Curriculum* by William Tuckman, and *Films for International Understanding* edited by Elizabeth H. Flory.

Branches of the OCIAA outside of the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States also promoted the culture of Latin America within the U.S. For example, the Radio Division, as previously discussed as part the propaganda campaign, also operated within the United States. Instead of taking control of the networks, the OCIAA

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid, 34.

worked within the regular commercial radio companies on their national programming. Representatives worked with advertising agencies and artists in order to create Latin American “flavored” programming. The campaign proved fruitful with all four major U.S. radio networks cooperating and major sponsors, such as the Coca-Cola Company, backing a national program that saluted a different Southern Republic each week.<sup>307</sup>

The OCIAA as an independent body ceased to exist as of August 31, 1945. The responsibilities were transferred to the Department of State, and the informational functions became called the Office for Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) and Nelson Rockefeller left the agency to Wallace K. Harrison, an architect friend of Rockefeller who collaborated on Rockefeller Center. The tone of the agency shifted and a number of Soviet spies were discovered within the organization, most of whom had served throughout the war. Unfortunately, while some cultural interchanges remained, the same diplomatic fervor was not present as the organization turned on itself to out communists.

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<sup>307</sup> For more on the history of Coca-Cola before and during World War II see Mark Pendergrast, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola : the Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company that Makes It*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

## Chapter 6: Changing Mexico, Creating a New Diplomacy

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All too often works of U.S. international relations history emphasize only the United States side of their issue. This was particularly common among dated, non-Western focused case studies that often suffer from methodological issues involving a lack of sources, language barriers, or classified information. As seen already throughout this study, ethnic diplomacy, just like most true examples of diplomacy, is a two-way exchange. The U.S. side, while somewhat personified by Sumner Welles and Cordell Hull, was a multifaceted expression of policy represented by a variety of different levels of government. The Mexican side of the exchange, which turned racism into an international issue in the first place, was more centralized stemming predominantly from President Manuel Ávila Camacho's administration and to a certain extent the opinions of his constituents.

While Ávila Camacho's administration made it clear—predominantly via close Ávila Camacho confidant and Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla—that racial prejudice in the United States was highly offensive to Mexicans, the only major diplomatic sanction in response to a lack of action in the United States was the bracero ban in Texas.<sup>308</sup> Seeing how strongly Mexico pushed the issue, why did Mexico take up the issue of race and then only push the United States so far? They could have demanded national legislation, or pressured the U.S. with the entirety of the bracero program or, more effectively, restricted trade of vital wartime materials. The reality was that Mexico had ulterior motives to their racial prejudice complaints similar to that of the State

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<sup>308</sup> The historical context of Texas and Mexico is worth exploring in relation to this odd policy decision. While explained more thoroughly in chapter 3, no evidence points to this simply being a long withstanding grudge between the government of Mexico and the Republic of Texas. However, the public opinion of middle and upper class Mexicans towards Texas influenced the administration's policy decisions. In other words, Mexico did not simply punish Texas because it was Texas. They punished them based on the stipulations of the bracero program, but it undoubtedly brought a bit of a vengeful joy to some Mexicans to know that Mexico could still punish Texas.

Department's ethnic diplomacy. While Mexicans did not like being treated as inferiors while traveling within the United States, the larger issue was to make certain the United States did not appear racist to Mexico in order to maximize their industrialization. This is best evidenced by an understanding of Mexican politics and economics at the time, their responses to the Sleepy Lagoon Incident and Zoot Suit Riots, which objectively speaking were the most grievous episodes of racial discrimination, and their good neighbor reciprocity with Texas.

An understanding of this moment in Mexican history reveals an interesting parallel to the "window of opportunity" that allowed ethnic diplomacy to exist. Leading up to the World War II, Mexico as a nation was still struggling to define what their 1910s Revolution meant. As fascism and totalitarianism became a global phenomenon, Mexico's stance was officially neutral. As the debate over the meaning of their Revolution, and the Spanish Civil War, raged on in Europe, many Mexicans throughout the late 1930s attached to either the far left or the far right. Mexico's understanding of the Spanish Civil War reveals this political division best. As Mexicans read about the conflict, many saw it both as similar to their own revolution ideologically and as a potential preview of what could happen in Mexico's future due to its unresolved social issues. The lower classes, mainly urban labor, sided with the Spanish Republicans and saw the war as a working-class struggle against fascism. The newly created national labor union (which included communist unions), Confederation of Mexican Workers (popularly known as CTM) even raised money from its members to support the "comrade worker militiamen of Spain."<sup>309</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, capitalists,

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<sup>309</sup>T. G. Powell, *Mexico and the Spanish Civil War*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981).

businessmen, and Catholics challenged the Left's interpretation of the Spanish Civil War. Already upset with Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency, they sided with the Spanish Falange. The debate flared in the media as Spanish refugees arrived in Mexico without the administration taking any official stance.

By 1938, the debate shifted more to Nazi and Italian aggression as more and more countries were feeling the weight of fascist military might. Cárdenas still kept Mexico officially neutral, but the newspapers show that a war for the hearts and minds of Mexico had already begun. As the preeminent expert on Mexico during World War II, Monica Rankin, has shown many times over, propaganda was a powerful and popular tool in Mexico. Arthur Dietrich, relative of Hitler's close confidant and Third Reich's Press Chief Otto Dietrich, had arrived in Mexico as a press attaché for the German embassy in 1924. Early on, much of Arthur Dietrich's work was community building. He founded the Comunidad del Pueblo Alemán (German People's Community), the Colegio Alemán (German School) and the Organización para el Extranjero (Foreigner Organization) and most notably—the National Socialist Party. By 1938, German propagandists permeated the Mexican press, regularly penning editorials in major newspapers. Thanks to the Mexican National Archives, a recently declassified report entitled, "El Nazismo en México por la División de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales" reveals the extent of the propaganda. Not only were the Nazi's producing their own publications such as *Defensa* (Defense), *Periódico Alemán* (literally German Newspaper), and *Timón* (Helm), they had bought off many of the nation's most popular newspapers and magazines. A U.S. military intelligence report revealed that these sources were receiving large sums of money every month from a bank account that was

traced back to a German military attaché in Washington. This even included two mainstream Mexico City dailies—*Excelsior* and *El Universal* which were believed to be receiving particularly large subsidies from the account. In addition, Dietrich's work got a major boost from the oil crisis. After the U.S. embargo of Mexican oil in 1938, Nazi Germany became a major buyer of Mexican petroleum and the U.S.-Mexican situation soured as U.S. oil companies launched their own propaganda offensive against President Cárdenas and Mexico, most notably a 1939 Standard Oil funded publication entitled, *Mexico at the Bar of Public Opinion*.<sup>310</sup>

By 1940, the Mexican report states that Nazi agents had a sophisticated network of spies and propaganda. Fortunately for the Allies cause, the facts about fascist aggression translated more into fear than sympathy. The mainstream papers remained anti-U.S., but they could not ignore wartime coverage of Germany's European conquest and its imperialist nature. Some Mexicans worried that the German presence in Mexico represented a 5<sup>th</sup> column and questioned Cárdenas's ability to prevent a fascist takeover. Responding to this pressure Cárdenas officially supported the U.S. and pro-allied forces and supplied weapons and materials to those fighting the Axis. In the same moment, Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs forced Dietrich to leave the country.

Amidst the global turmoil of the late 1930s, Mexico's own future was at stake with a presidential election. One of the consensus narratives within Mexican history scholarship is that Mexico took a conservative turn with this election in 1940. After the controversial and economically tumultuous few years of Lázaro Cárdenas's progressive

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<sup>310</sup> Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors : The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II*; Rankin, *¡México, La Patria! : Propaganda and Production during World War II*.



reforms which included intensified land reform, nationalized oil (discussed previously), and the reduction of clerical power in education, the government shifted course. This was not uncommon in the one-party Mexican system at the time. The leaders of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (popularly known in Spanish with the acronym: PRI) typically congregated prior to a presidential election and often made potentially major decisions about what Mexico needed for both their country and therefore in their next president. Cárdenas himself supported the conservative General Ávila Camacho who represented a very different opinion on the status of the Mexican Revolution. While Cárdenas felt as though the revolution was incomplete, Ávila Camacho believed that it had been completed and the next step was a more industrialized economy. Despite this difference, the two were still friends and Ávila Camacho held it as a point of pride that he had worked under Cárdenas previously.

With this mindset, Ávila Camacho's economic platform was the central piece of his administration. He called for the "Mexicanization" of Mexico's Industry. The idea was to make Mexico self-sufficient for vital manufactured goods and to export finished products. This was a major change from the previous industrialization efforts that emphasized the exporting of raw materials. Throughout the 1940s legislation was passed to boost manufacturing. In 1941, the Law of Manufacturing Industries gave tax breaks and tariff protection for manufacturers, in 1942 the National Chamber of Industry was created to drum up public support for industrial development, and in 1944 the state's *Nacional Financiera* was restructured to serve as a bank for to support industrialists and manufacturers. While this was the goal, Ávila has also been tied to

the Monterrey Group by well-known Mexicanist Historian Stephen Niblo.<sup>311</sup> The Monterrey Group was Mexico's foremost organization of powerful industrial barons who preferred a closer relationship with the United States and "whose leaders dreamed of a return to the regimes of Porfirio Díaz."<sup>312</sup> Prior to his election as president, Ávila Camacho was seemingly courted by the Monterrey Group. While no smoking gun document has been found of their close relationship, he did go to Monterrey four times in 1939, and his later policies revealed a close relationship with individuals tied to the group.<sup>313</sup>

Foreigners were encouraged to invest, however, some safeguards were put in place. Foreigners were not allowed to invest in extractive industries, only manufacturing ones. Even then, they could only control up to 49% of a particular company, which became known as the 51% rule. In addition, in 1944 Mexico enacted import controls to protect their nascent companies.<sup>314</sup> While some of the historiography simply leaves the story on this positive note of the compromising balance of nationalization, protectionist, and foreign capital, other scholars are quick to point out that major loopholes existed to these rules contributing to the popular historical idea that Mexican laws are often not enforced to the spirit of their meaning.<sup>315</sup> The result was that U.S. companies held power in a number of companies that produced high demand raw materials.

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<sup>311</sup> Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s : Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilimington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1999).

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.p 150.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Sanford Alexander Mosk, *Industrial Revolution in Mexico* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1975).

<sup>315</sup> W. Dirk Raat and Michael M. Brescia, *Mexico and the United States : Ambivalent Vistas*, 4th ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

Eventually, the state-planning of Mexico in conjunction with U.S. investment resulted in government built industries in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey and the development of a vast amount of transportation infrastructure, mainly roads and railways. The biggest supporters for this type of development were industrialist political groups such as *El Nuevo Grupo* (The New Group), comprised mainly of urban manufacturers. *El Nuevo Grupo's* specific flagship issue was the subsidizing of new factories to produce tools for chemical and machinery industries.<sup>316</sup>

The more in-depth economic studies of Latin American economies during World War II argue that the war “quickly intensified demand” for Latin American primary products, increasing profits from exports. So while manufacturing was the party line, key resources were also extracted at record levels. On June 15, 1941 Mexico and the U.S. signed the Souglas-Weichers Agreement, which specified that Mexico would sell all of its strategic mineral output to the United States. Other agreements followed, cementing Mexico deeper and deeper into the United States wartime production industrial framework. The numbers reveal the changes; between 1940 and 1950 oil production shot up from 44,448,191 barrels to 73,881,472 barrels annually. Steel more than doubled from 149,655 tons to 332,631 in the same period, Cotton production quadrupled up to 260,000 metric tons, and Zinc nearly doubled to 262,425 metric tons. Ultimately the wartime GDP growth was largely export driven, while the Export GDP grew 11.7% from 1940-45, the real per capita GDP in the same span was only 4.6%. To Ávila Camacho's credit, this was the largest margin of real per capita GDP growth

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<sup>316</sup> Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s : Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*.

during World War II in Latin America, with the rest of the region averaging growth from - 0.1 to 2%.<sup>317</sup>

Unfortunately, the resulting economic growth from these changes did not translate into direct improvements for the general Mexican populace. Available manpower was nonexistent, social projects were not on the agenda, and the ability to import consumer goods was literally impossible due to a lack of availability. Instead, Mexico simply banked the surpluses and their reserves grew by 480% between 1940 and 1945.<sup>318</sup>

Ground transportation was also greatly improved during the war in an effort to maximize Mexican exports into the United States. At the beginning of the war, porters and mule trains were more common than trucks for transportation. In 1940, only 41,932 trucks existed in the entire country, but by 1950 this number would swell to 105,162. Much of this traffic traveled along the much needed and newly developed road system. The Federal Highway Network in 1940 only ran 9,929 kilometers; by 1950 it had more than doubled to 21,422. Many of these new roads were funded by Mexico's 1941 agreement with the United States to purchase \$10 million in road bonds with their newly found economic surplus.<sup>319</sup> A diplomatic victory for Mexico during this time was the U.S. agreement to the Pan-American Highway. While it was publically praised as a sign of hemispherical unity by leaders on both sides, its practical purpose was as a new road to support the export economy. Railroads of course were also essential. Once scholar argues that the railroads were so overly utilized during the war that when it ended the

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> R. A. Ferrero, *La Política y La Economía Nacional*. (Lima: Editorial Lumen, 1946.)

<sup>319</sup> *El Nacional*, September 1, 1942.

railways were in a significant state of disrepair. In fact, when estimating Mexico's raw material value during the Korean War, the United States believed that "the railroad network would be of minimal value."<sup>320</sup>

While the industrialization and rapid economic growth, not seen since "good" eras of the Porfiriato, was what headlined Ávila Camacho's presidency, he also was forced to deal with the fascist presence in his country and political debate he inherited from his predecessor. Ávila Camacho was among those who believed the aggression of the Axis powers was imperialistic and threatening to the world. Given the state of Asia and Europe in December of 1941, it was not unrealistic for Ávila Camacho to consider world domination by totalitarian regimes a viable reality. At a key moment, Ávila Camacho had Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla address the Mexican Congress and call for Mexico to join with the Allied effort. The reasoning by which he made this argument is extremely revealing. He first linked the fight against fascism as a fight for freedom, invoking Mexico's own history and recent revolution. Secondly, he argued that Indian and mestizo groups would be oppressed by Germany's racial policies. Once again, racial equality was evoked by Padilla, this time as a key element of why Mexico was siding with the allies, which meant racial prejudices in the United States jeopardized this partnership. The choice to work closely was extremely difficult for many Mexicans to accept; but these two reasons, which had nothing to do with the United States itself, were a compelling argument which allowed Ávila Camacho to push forward his conservative industrialization effort in the name of the Mexican Revolution, freedom, and racial equality. Taking this line of thought to its fullest extent, this policy

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<sup>320</sup> Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s : Modernity, Politics, and Corruption*.

decision had implication for all of Latin America. The autobiographer/biographer of the Mexican Mural Renaissance, Anita Brenner, weighed in on Mexico's hemispherical importance during World War II. She stated, "Because of Mexico's immediate revolutionary past, it is something like a school for . . . many other Latin American Republics; its moral leadership is beyond its size. Therefore it has had an enormous effect on the conduct of the war, for without its diplomatic work, the line-up of twenty-one American republics against the Axis could not have been achieved."<sup>321</sup> While her argument is based off of personal experience and connections, it is not unfair to argue that U.S. prejudices against Latin Americans, specifically Mexicans, potentially jeopardized cooperation in the name of hemispherical solidarity for all of Latin America.

The propaganda war favored the Allies as the OCIAA got involved and Ávila Camacho's own propaganda office, created after the Douglas-Weichers Agreement, got to work. Padilla's principles for supporting the Allies are found throughout the propaganda from both countries; however, the most common message portrayed to the average citizen in Mexico was that working hard equaled being patriotic and a defender of freedom. While Mexico and the United States had different reasons for fighting fascism, there was an agreement that industrialization and cooperation were keys for victory. The United States seemed more focused on winning the war abroad, while Mexico's actions reinforce the idea that they were more interested in developing as an industrial nation while preventing imperialism from arriving on their shores. In terms of ethnic diplomacy, this meant that both nations were somewhat on the same page. Both

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<sup>321</sup> Lynn V. Foster, *A Brief History of Mexico*, 4th ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2009).

nations saw the racial inequality as a stumbling block to their goals; therefore it is not surprising that Mexico was unwilling to push the issue to the breaking point.

From his first days in office, Camacho valued a close relationship with the United States. Upon taking office, Padilla told the U.S. Embassy that they were ready to create a Joint Mexican-United States Defense Commission, something Cárdenas has been unwilling to do. In the months before Pearl Harbor, Padilla and Camacho both made efforts to have other Latin American nations join a stand against German Aggression and encouraged cooperation with the United States. Camacho however was forced to deal with a significant amount of criticism concerning his moves towards greater U.S.-Mexican cooperation. Political leaders and journalists liked to remind their audiences of previous U.S. interventions, the Mexican-American War, and racial discrimination against Mexicans. The most notable periodical to express this view as *Fraternidad*, but by 1943 this faction became more organized through the formation of the *Comité en Contra el Racismo* (Committee Against Racism). The group was quite influential within the PRI and commanded significant support from the Mexican public. One of their most popular arguments was to equate the racism in the American southwest to Nazi racial superiority. Ultimately, this political faction seems to have exerted substantial influence on Camacho's attention to racial discrimination.

One good example of the Mexican government's two-track diplomacy on the racial discrimination issue is found in its responses to Governor Coke Stevenson's attempt to remove the bracero ban. When Stevenson visited Mexico, Camacho and Padilla granted Stevenson a seat of honor at the National Palace and showed appreciation for Texas's ethnic diplomacy. However, while Stevenson was in Mexico,

Alejandro Carrillo, a leftist Congressman who supported labor rights, expressed the viewpoint of the *Comité en Contra el Racismo*. Alejandro Carrillo was chairman of the newly formed Committee on Mexicans in the Exterior in the Chamber of Deputies. The Committee monitored racial discrimination in an official capacity and encouraged Mexicans traveling abroad to report acts of discrimination to their local consuls. At a public event in San Antonio, Carrillo announced Mexico's continuation of the bracero ban. He went on to state that President Camacho "follows with great interest the experiences of Mexicans who find themselves in Texas and in the other entities of the United States." He went on to point out that wartime relations,

present the opportunity to consolidate the Mexico-American friendship, to avoid cases of racial discrimination that are absolutely contrary to the democratic spirit in all the American nations, where the worth of human beings is not measured by the shape of the cranium, the color of their skin or their eyes, the acceptance of this false theory would be tantamount to declaring ourselves followers of Hitler.<sup>322</sup>

Mexico's reactions to the Sleepy Lagoon Incident and Zoot Suit riots serves as ideal evidence that Ávila Camacho and the Mexican urban population was not going to let racism in the United States spoil the country's larger plan.<sup>323</sup> As news of the riots spread to below the border, reactions were mixed towards the Pachucos. The Mexican government officially was concerned about Mexican-Americans living in Los Angeles and sent emissaries to meet with city and state authorities concerning the riot; however, they did not believe that "anti-Mexican hysteria" caused the violence. The reports were veiled at first. *El Universal* ran a United Press story about the clash between sailors and costumed individual labeled as "Tarzans." The article notably did not distinguish

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<sup>322</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 86-87.

<sup>323</sup> It is worthwhile to point out that Mexico's *mestizo* and indigenous populations were less prominent among this group of urban industrialists than in other parts of Mexico.



the “Tarzans” as Mexican-American.<sup>324</sup> The government’s own newspaper, *El Nacional* ran a similar story, but labeled the “Tarzans” as “idle and bad-living criminals” who were promptly being dealt with by the local authorities.<sup>325</sup> The Mexican newspaper *La Prensa* was the first to unveil the racial side of the crimes. Even so, the headline was not a condemnation. It read, “Not True Mexicans, they are an Offense to our Republic.” The paper went on to chastise the Pachucos and explain their behavior with their own racial prejudices. The author argued that the colony in Los Angeles is “almost always mestizos of Mexican and Negro, or Mexican and Chinese or Filipino [heritage]; the great majority of them are not by birth or nationality Mexicans.”<sup>326</sup> While I could not find direct proof of these articles being fabricated by government officials on either side of the border, the prevalence of the OCIAA and Ávila Camacho’s propaganda machines at this time and other examples of their influence in these newspapers raises legitimate suspicion in regards to their strong viewpoints and censorship. Another source of popular public commentary on the Pachucos was famed Mexican poet Octavio Paz, who happened to be living in Los Angeles during the riot. He labeled them as “‘sinister clowns’ caught between the ‘labyrinth of solitude’ in Mexican culture and the materialism of American culture.”<sup>327</sup>

On the other side of the fence were activists ready to protest American racism. With many donning Zoot Suits, a group in Mexico City traveled around town “booing, jeering, and hissing” an establishment with links or visible signs of a connection to the

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<sup>324</sup> “Riña entre ‘tarzanes’ y marinos,” *El Universal*, June 9, 1943 as cited in Halbert Jones, *The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico : World War II and the Consolidation of the Post-Revolutionary State*.

<sup>325</sup> “Tarzanes que son problema,” *El Nacional*, June, 1943.

<sup>326</sup> Griswold del Castillo, “The International Dimensions of the Zoot Suit Riots.”

<sup>327</sup> Eduardo Obregon Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*.

United States.<sup>328</sup> Interestingly, two days before this particular walkabout, two young Mexicans wearing Zoot Suits were attacked and stripped of their activist garments. Few details of the episode were recorded in the newspapers, but conspiracy theories from the anti-U.S. side of the debate made the situation tense. Ultimately the activists formed the *Comité de Defensa de Los Mexicanos de Afuera* (Committee for the Defense of Mexicanos Abroad) which continued organized protests against racism and the lack of a stronger response from the Mexican government. Foreign Minister Padilla was the primary target of their criticism. Despite Padilla's stance on racial issues, his overall close cooperation with the United States, which culminated in his visit to D.C. a year earlier in 1942, made him the closest Mexican official to the United States from the perspective of most Mexicans. On June 15<sup>th</sup> Padilla sent a friendly worded message to Secretary of State Hull diplomatically stating that he wanted those responsible for the riots punished and the victims compensated.<sup>329</sup> Padilla's detractors which included the Comité and publications such as *Novedadas* and *La Nación* fiercely contested the issue, suggesting Padilla should have responded more strongly or even fly to Los Angeles to make sure they received justice. Padilla responded to the critics by standing his ground, arguing that traveling to the scene and influencing the situation would set a precedent for one state in the internal affairs of another. The irony was not lost on his critics, who saw the United States as exerting influence in Mexico. In addition, under the guise of ethnic diplomacy, Padilla had already influenced U.S. policy at the state and national levels.

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<sup>328</sup> Griswold del Castillo....."The international ...."

<sup>329</sup> Secretariat of Foreign Relations to Mexican Embassy in Washington, June 15, 1943, AEMEUA, file 73-0/242.5(73-27)I, SRE as cited in Jones, *The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico : World War II and the Consolidation of the Post-Revolutionary State*. p 135.

Another and much more real threat to U.S.-Mexican harmony emerged after the Zoot Suit Riots. The Sinarchists and *Acción Nacional* in Mexico, both used their own media outlets to propagandize anti-U.S./pro-fascist arguments, breathing new life into the fascist side of the propaganda war which had been ongoing since the late 1930s. These groups were met with resistance from the PRI supported CTM in particular. As the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Citizen's Committee pointed out, "Lombardo Toledano [founder of the Confederation of Mexican Workers or CTM] and Mexican labor called for firmer unity among the win-the-war forces in both countries to defeat the common enemy. If the Mexican Fifth Column had a limited success in capitalizing on the work of its U. S. counterpart, it was because Lombardo and other democratic leaders in Latin America were able to point to the activities of organized labor in the U. S. and of such groups as the Citizens' Committee as proof that not all Americans think like the very publically racist Sheriff Office's representative Ed Duran Ayres. Ayres, made the official statement concerning the Zoot Suit incident for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. One could easily see how his comments could be inflammatory:

The biological basis is the main basis to work from....When the Spaniards conquered Mexico they found an organized society composed of many tribes of Indians ruled over by the Aztecs who were given over to human sacrifice. Historian's record that as many as 30,000 Indians were sacrificed . . . in one day, their bodies ... opened by stone knives and their hearts torn out.... This total disregard for human life has always been universal throughout the Americas among the Indian population, which of course is well known to everyone.... This Mexican element ... knows and feels ... a desire to use a knife or some lethal weapon.... His desire is to kill. or at least let blood....<sup>330</sup>

By the time this potentially disastrous racial violence occurred, Mexico's wartime economic plan was already in effect. Previously Mexico proved they were willing to

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<sup>330</sup> Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee Los Angeles., *The Sleepy Lagoon Case*.

diplomatically sanction an individual state (Texas), but their response to this episode shows that they were not willing to punish the U.S. as a whole, nor a state vital to hemispherical defense and more progressive in fixing their racial problems (California). By utilizing these state-specific foreign policies towards the United States the industrial elite and Presidential Administration could ensure their economic plan remained intact and could argue that they were still addressing a popular issue among mestizos and people of indigenous ancestry.

Another piece of evidence for how both Mexico and the United States both wanted to sweep racial unrest under the rug occurred between the Sleepy Lagoon incident and the Zoot Suit Riots. Even before Coke Stevenson took his two-week tour of Mexico, FDR became the first president to visit Latin America (as President) by meeting with President Camacho on Mexican soil. The overall goal for both sides was to reaffirm their cooperation and alliance with a large amount of press coverage and public fanfare. Interestingly, both FDR and Ávila Camacho's made historically based quotes, likely chosen to invoke Mexicans historical pride and to further legitimize the Camacho Administration's connection to the Mexican Revolution. Their misrepresentation of their neighbor's national histories reveals how both sides felt about issues that could potentially break the current relationship. Whereas, we later learn that Mexico was willing to forgive the Zoot Suit riots, apparently the two leaders were also willing to wash away the two countries conflicting histories by forgetting some fairly major historical details. IN 1943, FDR stated that, "Our two countries owe their independence to the fact that your ancestors and mine held the same truths to be worth fighting for and dying for. Hidalgo and Juarez were men of the same stamp as

Washington and Jefferson." Ávila Camacho then replied, "Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln are present in the current decisions of your country. And, among your other claims to fame, your Excellency undoubtedly possesses that of having inflexibly fought to apply to the relations between the countries of this hemisphere the teachings of the same liberators."<sup>331</sup> The historic meeting also produced the Mexican-American Commission for Economic Cooperation. This agency formalized the economic partnership, which FDR described as "interdependence."

For the record, the statements were successful in their purpose. For one, the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Citizen's Committee fully embraced the fabricated history, by believing that "On April 20th, 1943 FDR voiced the faith which enables men of all races, creeds and colors to join together in the fight against the common enemy, everywhere in the world."<sup>332</sup> Conveniently forgetting about specific major aspects of United States and Latin American history was convenient for both sides at this particular moment.

Mexico's two-track diplomacy was again evident days a mere few days after the Roosevelt-Camacho meeting. Mexican Consul Luis L. Duplán issued a scathing report of discrimination in Texas, stating that it was a major obstacle to wartime cooperation. The report was widely distributed, with copies going to the State Department, LULAC, the OCIAA, and the Texan government.<sup>333</sup>

Even Texas would receive some reciprocal goodwill by the end of the war. While not as clear cut as the Mexican response to the Sleepy Lagoon or Zoot Suit Riots, there

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 83.

was cultural goodwill initiated from the Mexican side of the border as well. The most entertaining episode occurred in 1946 when Governor Coke Stevenson was planning another trip to Mexico, this time without the hand-holding of the OCIAA and the State Department. Unfortunately, his brother grew gravely ill and he was forced to cancel the trip on fairly short notice. Rather than take the cancellation as a snub, the Mexican governors of the states he was slated to visit expressed their concern respectively and seemed to sympathize with the Governor. Dr. José Ibarra González, representing Mexico's University presence in Rosita, Coahuila, decided to give the governor arguably one of the most interesting diplomatic gifts in all of history: a live black bear. After showing his appreciation, the governor accepted the odd gift feeling pressure that refusing it would cause further damage with his southern neighbors. Once in possession of "Chita," the governor's dilemma of what to do with the young beast became somewhat public knowledge around the state. The cub was only eleven months old and had previously lived in Ibarra González's home "eating milk, fruits, and hard sweet rolls."<sup>334</sup> Ultimately, Baylor University learned about the bear and the Baylor Chamber of Commerce Volunteers—who care for the bears—petitioned the governor to give it to them as a gift. On September 18, 1946 "Chita" made her way to Waco where she would live out her life being protected by Baylor students against Texas A&M pranksters prior to any "Battle of the Brazos."

Ultimately, Mexico's combining of industrialization with patriotism, racial equality, and revolutionary ideas was successful; however, it was also a short lived success. By 1945, wartime policies had birthed a new class of industrialists in Mexico. They were

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productive, but still far behind their northern neighbors in terms of a presence on the global market. As the war drew to a close, the industrialists who were so closely associated with Ávila Camacho feared for their existence if forced to compete with U.S. companies come peacetime.

The window of opportunity in the U.S. that birthed ethnic diplomacy and an overall more sympathetic view towards Mexico's role in hemispherical cooperation had closed. For one, the champions of these policies were no longer in power. Sumner Welles forcibly resigned in September of 1943, Cordell Hull was out of office due to illness by November of 1944, and FDR died in April of 1945. Hull's most trusted Latin American specialist, Laurence Duggan—who was later found to be a Soviet spy, was also out of office in 1944. Their replacements would instead emphasize trade, specifically free-market capitalism with no tariff barriers, which directly conflicted with Ávila Camacho's Hemispherical Cooperation argument for Mexico.

Ávila Camacho saw this diversion of interests coming as early as 1942. A series of conferences between government officials from the Ministry of National Economy and the School of National Economy at the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico began to discuss potential problems Mexico would face upon the end of the war. After the conferences, Ávila Camacho appointed a commission to study the matter, known as the Comisión Nacional de Planación. The Commission became active in propaganda targeted towards the upper classes and the new industrialists, reinforcing the concept that Mexico would protect and support the new businesses. At the 1945 Inter-American Conference of Problems of War and Peace held at Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City the diverging economic interests of the two countries officially clashed for the first time.

The U.S. representatives proposed resolutions to the charter which eliminated trade barriers across the hemisphere and discouraged any new industrial growth which would require protectionist policies. On all other sides of the negotiating table, Latin Americans asked for more economic aid, defended state run corporations, and defended their protectionist measures. Despite this major division, the pressure to create an agreement and the success of World War II ensured the “Act of Chapultepec” would pass, ultimately needing nebulous language for its economic policy to appease the majority. The agreement essentially only agreed to continue supporting the principle of hemispherical solidarity and reciprocal assistance in the face of aggressors—which is not all that different from where the hemisphere began prior to the fascist aggression.

After Chapultepec, the U.S. aimed to eliminate nationalist economic policies. The new Undersecretary of State for Latin America, Spruille Braden, argued that “The exaggerated nationalism, now so prevalent everywhere” needed to be “completely extirpated.”<sup>335</sup> Braden became fixated on the cause, particularly after Braden lost in his efforts to prevent Juan Perón from coming to power while he was serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Argentina in Buenos Aires. After the famed UN conference in San Francisco, the U.S. cancelled most of its guaranteed contracts for minerals and other strategic materials with Latin American countries. Despite this, most Latin American economies continued to boom until 1947, using their newly filled reserves to import products from the United States. When the reserves ran dry, the economy quickly stalled and most of Latin America, Mexico included, was forced to devalue their

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<sup>335</sup> David Rock, *LA in the US & Donald Dozer Are We Good Neighbors*



currency. The purveyors of ethnic diplomacy, now out of power, gave advice from the sidelines. Sumner Welles argued that the U.S. should try to perfect “the existing inter-American system. The United States had to continue wholeheartedly its policy of economic cooperation with its American neighbors. Such bread cast upon the waters come back to this country a hundredfold.” In a second book published in 1946, Welles continued his argument, predicting that “unless economic aid was reinstated, Latin America would experience more social and economic trouble and potentially turn to communism.”<sup>336</sup> Laurence Duggan was even more critical, openly criticizing the abrupt end to the wartime trade contracts and the failure to assist Latin America’s transition to a peacetime economy. He stated that the United States should adopt, “an understanding and tolerant attitude toward tariff protection in Latin America.”<sup>337</sup>

As the economic values between the two countries broke apart, so did ethnic diplomacy. A new priority for all U.S. foreign affairs was looming in the form of the Soviet threat, which would prove to be a much less amiable bear than “Chita.” Just as the reality of 1942 reordered the diplomatic world in the Western Hemisphere for a time, so did the start of the Cold War. Mexico no longer had as strong of a diplomatic presence to influence the United States as it had during the war and the United States Department of State became more preoccupied with leftists in Latin America—whom ironically as seen with CTM’s support of ethnic diplomacy were groups often at the forefront of their solidarity campaign.

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<sup>336</sup> Sumner Welles, *Where are we heading?* (New York, London,: Harper & Brothers, 1946).

<sup>337</sup> Laurence Duggan, *The Americas; the Search for Hemisphere Security* (New York,: Holt, 1949).

The complaints about racial prejudice from Mexico slowed and the State Department policy went back to pre-war levels of no response or passing full responsibility back to the governor. There were two noticeable differences however. Firstly, thanks to the wealth of scholarship on Chicano and Mexican-American activism in the United States, a lot of work has been done revealing the extreme growth of activist organizations during the war years. LULAC had only around a dozen active members initially and the Good Neighbor Commission initially only met occasionally with no real budget. In the post-war years LULAC increased membership exponentially and heavily increased its geographic footprint while the Good Neighbor Commission of Texas became well-funded, well organized, and met on a regular schedule.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Texas State Archives. LULAC Files Benson Collection, University of Texas at Austin. For more on LULAC see Marquez, *LULAC : the Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization*; Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy*.

## Conclusion: The “So What” Factor

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Winston Churchill, one of the most famous historical figures of World War II, is also one of the most highly quoted people from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The inexorable orator discussed a variety of topics, but he held a special place for the subject of history as he regularly quipped about the usefulness of it. Cambridge Churchill historian, J.H. Plumb, wrote, "It (history) became part of his politics, his diplomacy, his strategy and his tactics. I think it is extremely difficult for anyone not born into Churchill's world or time to realize what a dominance the past had over all his thinking and action." The most famous representation of this mentality was Churchill's comment to U.S. Presidential speechwriter James Humes, where Churchill advised, "Study history. Study history. In history lies all the secrets of statecraft." He later famously echoed this belief in another oft quoted line, "A good knowledge of history is a quiver of arrows in debates."<sup>339</sup> While many people, including Churchill, would agree that learning history simply for the sake of learning is a valuable way to spend one's time, I believe Churchill would also agree in asking the follow up question that I not-so-eloquently term as "so what?" In this case of this project, ethnic diplomacy is an intriguing concept, but "so what?" In other words, what deeper knowledge or information beyond the story itself is achieved from understanding *Ethnic Diplomacy*? I believe there are several significant broader points to be taken from the research represented here; specifically, the importance of Latin America during World War II, a more thorough understanding of U.S.-Mexican relations, the benefits of a hemispherical or borderless history, how Southwest borderlands history can fit in with wartime diplomacy, the difference between racial constructs in the U.S. and Mexico, the potential for state governments playing a role in the creation of

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<sup>339</sup> John M. Martin, "Winston Churchill's Cold War," *Library of Congress Information Journal* 61, no. 1 (January 2003).

foreign policy, and motivation as a new methodology example for categorizing diplomatic behavior.

First, *Ethnic Diplomacy* helps change the perspective on Latin America during World War II. The typical narrative of World War II does not include anything from Latin America, except perhaps for conspiracy theorists who believe Hitler escaped to Argentina with other former Nazis. Even historians of the era normally only acknowledge the combatants: the 201<sup>st</sup> Fighter Squadron from Mexico and the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. From Lend-Lease and troop deployment statistics we saw that the United States valued their Latin American neighbors with a significant amount of U.S. dollars. In addition, the U.S. did not hide the fact that they intended to maximize Latin American exports in their wartime production. Moreover, *Ethnic Diplomacy* reveals that not only was U.S.-Mexican relations important; U.S.-Latin American relations were as well.

Ethnic Diplomacy represented a drastic change to the history of U.S.-Mexico relations and an enhancement of our understanding of FDR's Good Neighbor Policy. The simple fact is that U.S.-Mexican relations had a rough history from Mexican Independence up through World War II. A short list includes the support of Texan independence, the annexation of Texas, the War of North American Aggression (known as the Mexican American War in the United States) with subsequent taking of 1/3 of Mexico's total land, the neocolonial economic exploitation which occurred during the Porfiriato, the tension surrounding the Mexican Revolution which included two separate invasions by U.S. troops into Mexico, and the raid into New Mexico by Pancho Villa's men (or potentially Pancho Villa and his men). Even in the 1930s under the Good

Neighbor Policy relations were stressed. While FDR promised non-intervention, other issues plagued the two neighbors. A mass deportation, with scholars estimating up to 2 million Mexican-Americans (including many born in the United States) back to Mexico increased border tensions during the Great Depression and neocolonial economic interests conflicted with the ardent nationalism of President Lázaro Cárdenas (such as the previously discussed Oil Crisis). Ethnic diplomacy in the name of hemispherical solidarity is a significant change from this troubled history. The simple fact was that Mexico's increased importance due to raw materials, laborers (legal *braceros* and illegals), regional influence, and security created a unique situation where Mexico was influencing the United States, rather than the other way around. In essence, the United States truly had to be good neighbors with Mexico for the time in their history.

*Ethnic Diplomacy* is also a step towards bridging the gap between two regional histories limited by nationality: United States history and Mexican history. Even though these two countries share an almost two-thousand mile long border and have countless links across the spectrum of politics, economics, social structures, and culture; the two nations are typically only discussed within each other's narratives if there is violence or major unrest between them. World War II is not one of these exceptions. The history of the United States during WWII and the economic development of Mexico during the 1940s are almost exclusively discussed in their own separate historical circles. I believe these two separate historiographies share common ground. It is unfair to think that the famed United States mobilization happened in a vacuum while concurrently Mexico, Brazil, and much of the rest of Latin America developed their strategic material industries at an incredibly fast rate. The ethnic diplomacy relationship between Mexico

and the United States is one lens into studying this economic relationship, undoubtedly there are others such as Gerard Colby's investigative study of the U.S. exploitation of the Amazon rainforest for products like rubber. Much of the evidence discussed in this project contributes to making *Ethnic Diplomacy* an international or hemispherical history. World War II, more than anything in U.S. history before it, engaged the United States into the globalized world. After the war the U.S. became central to the metaphorically shrinking world around them with Cold War weaponry and advances in transportation, information, and communication over the next few decades. However, as *Ethnic Diplomacy* proves, even before the Cold War the success of the United States hinged on their relationships from one side of the globe to other. The world would never be unconnected again, or perhaps never truly was despite U.S. isolationist's best arguments. Personally, I believe more work needs to be done in this area to create a more united hemispherical understanding of "the war at home."

*Ethnic Diplomacy* also contributes to the history of Southwest borderlands in the World War II era. The vast majority of incidents of racial prejudice occurred in what historians have termed the "outer borderlands" both before ethnic diplomacy was created and during the policies lifetime.<sup>340</sup> The "outer borderlands" is a social definition of the region (since it is hard to define the borderlands with real boundaries) which is defined by "feeling the impact of the border," in this case the extent of racial prejudice was felt all the way to Los Angeles and in every border state. The reality is that racial prejudice did not suddenly pop up in the 1930s nor was it subsequently eliminated in the 1940s via the different forms of diplomacy. However, the area of the Southwest United

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<sup>340</sup> Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. Fall (1997).

States that caused turmoil during this era of ethnic diplomacy did go through some major changes in the 1920s and 30s. Mexican-American immigration swelled incredibly with the pushing factor of the instability of the Mexican Revolution and from the pull of economic opportunity due to the rise of commercial agriculture in California. Racial prejudice was evident prior to the increase of immigrants, but with tens of thousands more Mexican-Americans coming into the country, the prevalence and disdain for the immigrant population became more pronounced. One relatively well documented incident occurred as early as 1917 in Bisbee, Arizona. Approximately 90% of the copper-mining workers were a part of a labor strike hoping to win an increase in pay, better safety standards, and the end of blacklisting union members. The labor force had a significant number of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Eventually the local law enforcement in Bisbee supported by a posse of about two thousand (mainly whites) broke the strike by putting the workers into box cars and shipping them off to the middle of the New Mexican desert where they were dumped and abandoned. What became known as the “Bisbee Deportation” was just one of many racial injustices to occur in this early period. When the Sheriff of Bisbee was interviewed by the Congressional Committee on Foreign Relations, the Sheriff’s actions were ultimately supported and the racial nature of the crime justified out of fear of a Mexican conspiracy known as the Plan of San Diego to take back the California territory.

In the 1930s, the backlash against Mexican sojourners and Mexican-Americans was even more pronounced, highlighted by the aforementioned mass deportation or “Repatriation” that sent approximately 2 million people to Mexico. It is estimated that 1.2 million of these forced migrants were American citizens at the time, including some



with *Californio* ancestry.<sup>341</sup> Nativism and anti-foreigner thought aided this process, ultimately deporting somewhere between half a million and a million people to Mexico. Hate crimes based on skin color were not uncommon and the travel journals and periodicals of the time period have some obvious racist viewpoints. Looking at any scholarly book concerning the rights of Mexican-Americans in this time period tells this tale in much greater detail than *Ethnic Diplomacy* does.<sup>342</sup> Most notably, this particular deportation event is covered in great detail in *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*.<sup>343</sup>

The Southwest borderlands in the decades leading up to the 1940s were largely an unregulated place in terms of racial equality. While the situation only resembled what borderlands theorists call an “unruly borderland” during the instability caused by the Mexican Revolution, as I explained above the racial tension was present throughout. As was the case with Brisbee, the U.S. government deferred to regional elites in nearly all cases of claims of racial prejudice. This lack of a national presence resulted in increasingly segregated communities. *Ethnic Diplomacy* represents a change to this dynamic, which continuing with borderlands history theory, aimed to produce a “quiet borderland.” Given the increased importance of Latin America, racial unrest in borderlands regions had potentially much larger implications even beyond the “outer borderland.” The purveyors of ethnic diplomacy, nearly all of whom were wealthy and powerful (whether they were Mexican Consuls, U.S. government officials, or even

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<sup>341</sup> *Californio* was a term used to identify former Mexican citizens who were naturalized under the Mexican-American War Treaty, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. The treaty guaranteed rights for this group of approximately 100,000 individuals.

<sup>342</sup> Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal : Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s.*; Kells, Héctor P. García : *everyday rhetoric and Mexican American civil rights.*; Rivas-Rodriguez, *Mexican Americans & World War II.*

<sup>343</sup> Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal : Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s.*

members of LULAC), pursued a peaceful borderland region with minimal tension—meaning a truly *quiet* borderland with minimal apprehension on both sides of the racial prejudice issue. This helps explain why major civil rights legislation was just as threatening as race riots. A secure southern border was part of the larger wartime planning, and any major civil rights legislation—as evidenced by the Texan Caucasian Rights Bill—threatened the borderlands stability in a similar fashion as racially motivated violence. Perhaps the best example of this is when the FEPC tried to hold a large-scale public hearing to address racial discrimination in September of 1942, the State Department immediately stepped in and stopped it.<sup>344</sup>

*Ethnic Diplomacy* borrows from, yet also contributes to the sociological understanding of how the racial constructs in the United States and Mexico differ and in this case clash. The Mexican elites were particularly bothered by the realization that in the United States they were simply another “Latin American” or “Mexican.” While in Mexico their skin color would be considered within the context of what percentage of African, Native American, and/or European a person was; once they entered the United States, Mexicans of all social classes experienced segregation as African-Americans did in the South. This conflict is one of the reasons the Mexican leadership pushing the United States for action on racial equality; however, the general population of Mexico also felt very strongly that the United States needed racial reform. As evidenced by Mexico’s response to the Zoot Suit Riots, there was a disconnect between the Mexican Leadership and the urban Mexican population. The Institutional Revolutionary Party leadership mirrored the U.S. government at the time. Both were only willing to push for

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<sup>344</sup> Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas : Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II*: 91.

racial equality as long as it did not jeopardize the wartime economy or security, whereas the Mexican population—as in the United States—had segments that wanted racial equality for the sake of racial equality.

Another “so what” element from *Ethnic Diplomacy* is the State Department’s involvement in race relations. I am not the first historian to address this issue; most notably Mary Dudziak argues in *Cold War Civil Rights* that international pressure was essential to the United States addressing its own racial inequalities. She argues that foreign nations became a strategic factor for African-American activist organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as early as World War II.<sup>345</sup> These foreign nations became a major concern for State Department officials in the 1950s and 60s and highly impacted Civil Rights legislation.<sup>346</sup> *Ethnic Diplomacy* provides and even earlier precedent for the United States government’s attempts to stop racial prejudice with a goal towards improving U.S.-relations with developing nations. In addition it adds credence to the idea that there seemingly has to be another reason, besides racism itself, for the government to get involved in ending racial prejudice. It also reveals the potential power foreign nations can have on U.S. domestic life and in turn also the power the State Department, especially when supported by a president, can have on domestic affairs.

*Ethnic Diplomacy* also reveals how individual states can play a role in the creation of foreign policy. From the analysis of the leadership from both Texas and California, we see how governors forged their own relationship with Mexico. I believe

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<sup>345</sup> Dudziak, 7-9.

<sup>346</sup> For more on this topic see Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*.

there are two broader truths that this ethnic diplomacy case study brings to light. First, a governor's role in foreign policy is dependent on reciprocation, whether good or bad, from the neighboring nation. A governor can try to forge his or her own path with a neighboring nation, but unless said nation recognizes the relationship and reciprocates (such as the *bracero* ban against Texas), the federal government will remain the purveyor of foreign policy while the states may still exist as an unequal partner (such as in California). Secondly, the Governor's power to impact foreign policy is still framed by the national government's policies. Mexico measured Texas and California not only by their own records on race relations, but also on their adherence to the State Department's push towards diplomacy that attempted to improve race relations.

Furthermore, *Ethnic Diplomacy* contributes an innovative way of categorizing diplomacy. Most historians of U.S. Foreign Relations tend to talk about diplomacy using descriptive terms such as "traditional," "cultural," "public," or "secret." While these all help explain the type of diplomacy being used, that is where the term's usefulness stops. I believe these are extremely useful terms and in fact make use of them here often. However, building on the shoulders of those innovative scholars who defined different categories of diplomacy, I believe an additional description can be added, one that explains the *why* behind the action rather than the *how*. The terminology of ethnic diplomacy provides simply another option to delineate the history of international relations, which allows for an emphasis on the why. In the case of what this paper covers, it would be appropriate to label much of it cultural, traditional, or even "backdoor" diplomacy. However, in this case where racial prejudice in foreign policy is the determining factor for inclusion, I believe the purpose behind the diplomacy is more

notable than the technique; therefore, *Ethnic Diplomacy* makes more sense in its categorization.

The mixing of racial prejudices with diplomacy also serves as an example of breaking down the barriers between social history and the history of foreign affairs. All too often as historians we entrench ourselves into categorical schools of study such as “political historian” or “social historian.” While these, and the many others, are noble pursuits in their own rights, histories such as *Ethnic Diplomacy* could otherwise remain lost without a marriage between these fields of study.

*Ethnic Diplomacy* also supplies an answer to the “so what” question in terms of power within diplomacy. In what is a unique episode in the long history of U.S.-Mexican relations, Mexico exerted agency in its relationship with the United States during World War II. The history of the relations between these two nations is filled with examples of the United States exerting its power over Mexico; therefore, the application of ethnic diplomacy by the U.S. government is a unique example of a diplomatic countercurrent. *Ethnic Diplomacy* contributes to our understanding of the broader U.S.-Mexican relationship and shows how power can be exerted in non-traditional ways.

*Ethnic Diplomacy* is an excellent example of how the “so what” question can be applied to history. As outlined above, *Ethnic Diplomacy* has a number of secondary purposes beyond just providing an interesting historical case study. So, while I believe Winston Churchill was correct by identifying the value of studying history, I think more sound advice would come from an amended quotation: “Study history, learn from history, and when you write history think about why it matters.”

# Appendices

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## Appendix 1: Letter to Ezequiel Padilla from Coke R. Stevenson

Austin, Tex.,  
July 12, 1943

His Excellency  
Señor licenciado Ezequiel Padilla,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs.  
México, D.F.  
Mexico

Excellency:

*It has recently come to my attention that the Mexican Government has contemplated that in view of discrimination which may exist against Mexicans resident in this State, Mexican laborers who are being sent elsewhere in the United States under existing agreements between the Mexican and United States Governments will not be sent to Texas. I have full regard for any decision which may be taken by the Republic of Mexico, and the reason for this letter is not to presume in any way, but to lay before Your Excellency certain factors of which I, as Governor of this State, am aware and which I believe will show that every effort is being made to wipe out such discrimination as may exist and to assure to Mexicans resident in Texas that they are not only a welcome part of the population of the State but are entitled to full protection under its laws. I likewise desire to stress the urgent need for Mexican farm workers in certain regions of the State where farmers are faced with crop losses due to the lack of manpower in the fields. While I am mentioning below certain specific areas where this need is most urgent, I am likewise advising the growers in those regions to avail themselves of the procedure set up under the Farm Security Administration for certifying to the need and obtaining the required authorization of the competent authorities in Washington in order that the Mexican Government may be apprised of this need through the usual channels specified in the Agreement of August 1942 as amended in April of this year.*

*In the two counties, cotton growing areas, of Nueces and San Patricio, farmers are looking forward this year to the largest crop in recent years. It is expected that this crop will have a value of some twenty million dollars. The efforts of growers, however, to secure adequate farm labor to pick the crop are unavailable due to the manpower which has been drained from this State into the armed forces of our country. I am advised that there is an immediate need for some 17,000 workers in this area alone; at present only 3,500 are available.*

*Any decision of Your Excellency's Government to prohibit the moving of Mexican laborers under these Agreements into the State of Texas would cause me deep distress, because the Government in my charge is now making a sincere effort to wipe out discrimination in cases where it has arisen and to make Mexicans resident in Texas feel that they are self-respecting and loyal members of the Communities in which they reside. Moreover, I am today issuing instructions to all law enforcing agencies of the Government of the State of Texas to be especially vigilant in order to prevent discriminations against Mexicans and where incidents arise to be especially severe*

winder the laws of this State in order that those who may commit infractions will not again violate our Good Neighbor Policy.

In this connection, I am pleased to advise Your Excellency that not only my Office but all branches of the State and Municipal governments in Texas are on the alert to ameliorate any misunderstandings that may arise or may have arisen through so-called class or race distinction. I am glad to say that Federal and State officials have already successfully ironed out a number of such instances, which after all Your Excellency must admit have been but a few in comparison to the many thousands of Mexican citizens, or U.S. citizens of Mexican descent who reside happily in this State. I may point out the number of cases which your Embassy filed with the State Department and which subsequently came to my attention have been amicably settled, or are in process of settlement. (I can assure Your Excellency that my administration is heartily in sympathy with the Good Neighbor policy).

I should like also to call to your attention the work being done by the Office of Inter-American Relations of The University of Texas as well as that of the Inter-American Cooperation Committee of the Texas Junior Chamber of Commerce. The schools of the State of Texas, moreover, are giving special attention to the problems of education which affect the Spanish speaking population of Texas. This summer, at Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio, and at the Southwest Texas State Teachers of San Marcos, large groups of teachers have assembled to study the specific problems of education in communities with Spanish speaking residents.

No citizen in the state of Texas is without his Mexican friends, for in some communities they form a majority of the residents. I have often been impressed by the high integrity, the initiative and public spirit displayed by persons in this State whose origin was in your own country. In a sense, I feel that Texas must be the proving ground for one of the principal aims of the Good Neighbor policy, a policy to which the Government and the people of Texas subscribe to wholeheartedly and in all sincerity.

Here in the City of Austin, capital of this State, there are officials of the State Government who have instructions to bring to my personal attention cases involving discrimination which may arise and, therefore, I would respectfully suggests that Your Excellency issue instructions to the Mexican Consuls throughout this State to bring to my attention informally such cases as may come to their knowledge to that directions can be given to resolve them.

Finally, in order to insure the success of our Good Neighbor policy as set forth in the House of Representatives Concurrent Resolution No. 105, I have today officially taken the following measures:

1. I have issued a proclamation by press and radio to all citizens of the State of Texas asking their complete cooperation in the observance of the Good Neighbor policy, and calling on them to stamp out wherever possible any unjust discrimination due to racial prejudice or class distinction.
2. I am considering the advisability of appointing a Commission to receive complaints, investigate and adjust all instances of discrimination violating the Good Neighbor policy, and generally to promote better relations, good will and friendship between the citizens of Mexico and Texas.



3. *I have always ordered all the State policy and the Ranger force to be on the alert against instances of discrimination and to warn citizens of the State that such discriminations against persons of Latin American extraction are in violation of the Good Neighbor policy as stated in House Concurrent Resolution No. 105, and though not punishable by criminal prosecution may be subject to civil action in the courts.*

*Although what I have said above applies largely to Mexican permanently residing in this State, I feel that I need not assure Your Excellency that all possible measures of protection will be extended to those Mexican workers whom the Mexican Government will permit to work in this State. In addition to the (sic) guarantees furnished by the Agreement between our respective Federal Governments, I can assure you that they will be performing a valuable service to the war effort and it is our high resolve that such service shall not go unrewarded.*

In am forwarding this letter to our Ambassador in Mexico City with the request that he places it in Your Excellency's hands. I desire further to assure Your Excellency that the people of this State will await with the highest interest the decision of the Mexican Government which I hope will permit Mexican workers to come to Texas in order to work on our farms, where they are so desperately needed.

I ask you to accept, Mr. Minister, an expression of my high esteem and sincere regard.

Sincerely Yours,

Coke Stevenson  
Governor of Texas

## **Appendix 2: Response to Governor Stevenson from Dr. Padilla**

Mexico City, July 20, 1943.

Hon. Coke R. Stevenson,  
Governor of the State of Texas,  
Austin, Texas, U.S.A.

Mr. Governor,

Sir:

From the letter which you have been good enough to address to me, I have noted with deeply sympathetic interest your views in regard to the eliminating, in Texas, every kind of discrimination against Mexican residents, as being opposed to the noble spirit of the times through which our democracies are now living, and to the guiding principles of the fight being waged to destroy Nazi and Fascist tyranny.

I have very carefully noted what you have to say in your letter, and how greatly you would regret any decision on the part of my Government, adverse to sending Mexican workers to assist farming labors in the State of Texas. Before going any further, I must assure you that such a decision would be no less painful to me, for I feel that the present hour demands the closest collaboration between our two peoples. This all the more as both Mexico and the United States have given eloquent and repeated proofs that they are building up a new structure of reciprocal understanding founded on solid and enduring friendship.

However, and within the spirit of the above facts and circumstances, I feel that I must draw your attention to a situation actually prevailing in the State of Texas.

There are many places in your State where Mexican residents cannot attend shows or places of decent amusement without exposing themselves to annoyance, criticism and protest. There are towns where my countrymen are forced to dwell in certain sections. Not even the families of our official representatives are safe from such persecution, or from unwarrantable molestation. Hardly a week ago, in the heart of an important city of the State of Texas, in a public establishment, they refused to serve the daughter of our Consul, just because they heard her speaking to another Mexican young lady she was with. Incidents like this occur daily, and if the newspapers gave special prominence to the one I mention, it was not so much because of its rarity as on account of the position of the person involved.

While Consuls report to the authorities, newspapers and dwellers on the Texas border father and transmit information directly reaching the whole people of the Republic of Mexico. Such reports have aroused a feeling of righteous indignation because of the discrimination shown against our nationals, based not only on racial differences, but in many cases on the mere fact of their Mexican nationality.

I have carefully considered the measures and safeguards which you have, impelled by a praiseworthy desire to remedy these anomalous conditions, seen fit to suggest with a view to counteracting, in the minds of the Mexican people, the animosity

shown by certain sections in Texas against nationals of this country. I feel absolutely convinced of the sincerity with which you regret, just as I do, these unfortunate incidents, which are all the more painful because they occur at a time when racial discrimination is branded as one of the very abused which the United Nations are fighting to abolish.

Mexico and the United States are laying the soundest foundations, in all their history, of an indissoluble friendship within their common interests of freedom and solidarity. To this end they are using the sincerest arguments of Pan Americanism, so vital to the defense of our Continent. The conduct of our peoples is an example and pattern from which shall flow the confidence of the other nations of this Hemisphere. It consequently becomes essential that the unfair humiliations (sic) inflicted on Mexicans by regressive prejudices leading to discrimination, disappear utterly in short order. The contrast with the courtesies and affection extended by the Mexican people to Americans dwelling in our midst or visiting us, is obvious if compared with the treatment meted out to my countrymen in certain sections of Texas. As a matter of fact, we are approaching a subject which may mean to the Americas one of their loftiest gains in behalf of brotherhood and unity. This excuses and authorizes us to discuss this transcendent topic with respectful frankness.

The foregoing considerations deeply disquiet my mind. The problem is a thorny one, and I am encouraged, when facing it, by the cordial tone of your letter which evidences the disinterested spirit in which it was written.

What remedies are available for solving this conflict? They are laws, wholesome propaganda and penalties. If these means of redress (sic) could be put into operation at once, with the necessary publicity to quieten (sic) minds burning with resentment, this would help to do away with a crying evil, one most seriously threatening to could an atmosphere which would, but for this, be brighter than ever before: that of the relations between our two people.

On such an understanding, I am sure that the Mexican Government would be delighted to make the cooperation of our workers available to the fields of the State of Texas. They would then go there just as enthusiastically as they now do to other States of the American Union, where they are not exposed to that discrimination to which our nationals are unfortunately subject in sections where racial animosity is perhaps fostered and aggravated by a fifth columnism which it might be advisable to trace and locate.

Believe me when I say, Mr. Governor, that any efforts on your part in behalf of the reciprocally patriotic aim of rooting in the mind of the people of Texas the conviction that racial hostility against Mexicans is notoriously unfair, and any measures taken to punish breaches of that principle of human equality which is the basis of our collective action in this international conflict, would not only result in genuine cordiality between our two peoples, but would also render eminent service to Pan Americanism of which both the United States and Mexico are sincere and ardent champions.

I feel sure that you will construe this letter, not only with that loftiness of aim evidenced by your generosity and attainments, but also with constructive intent, which I warmly share, and I have the honor to renew to you, Mr. Governor, the assurances of my distinguished consideration.

*Ezequiel PADILLA*

### **Appendix 3: PROCLAMATION OF MEXICAN FRIENDSHIP DAY**

*Our Nation is at war against powerful and ruthless enemy nations and peoples. At our side in this great struggle stand the government and the people of our good neighbor republic, the United States of Mexico.*

*The Mexican Government and people are bound together by their devotion to the same ideals of freedom and democracy that we of this country hold dear. Therefore, their share of the burden of the war will be carried and their share of responsibility for winning the war will be discharged with enthusiasm, energy, fidelity and determination equal to our own, and leading, moreover, to like peacetime goals.*

*Mexico and California have a common boundary. Hundreds of thousands of Mexican citizens reside in California. Thousands of Californians reside in Mexico. The very cultures and histories of the two states have much in common, even unto their origins. Commercially, we are very largely dependent upon each other.*

*Therefore, the friendship that exists between the people and the governments of the two states, Mexico and California, is strong because it is natural, and real because it is mutual. Moreover, it is of the greatest possible importance to us all, now that our people are "brothers in arms."*

*September sixteenth, being Mexico's national Independence Day, offers us a special and timely opportunity to evidence and celebrate our friendship for Mexico.*

*Now, therefore, I, Culbert L. Olson, Governor of California, do hereby designate Wednesday, September sixteenth, 1942, for general observance as Mexican Friendship Day in California, and I hereby give public notice that public ceremonies, celebrating Mexican independence and honoring the government, the people and the President of Mexico, will be held and conducted in front of the State Building in Los Angeles on Wednesday, September sixteenth, 1942, at 10:30 o'clock in the morning.*

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of California to be affixed this 29<sup>th</sup> day of August, A.D. one thousand nine hundred forty-two.*

*[seal]  
California*

CULBERT OLSON  
Governor of

PAUL PEEK  
Secretary of State

**Appendix 4:**  
**MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE AND NEW WORLD IDEALS**  
**“THREE MORE FREEDOMS”**

By HENRY A. WALLACE, Vice-President of the United States

Approximate English translation of address delivered in Spanish on the occasion of the celebration of Mexico's Independence Day at Los Angeles, Cal., September 16, 1942

TODAY we are gathered here in California to celebrate the anniversary of the independence of our neighbor country, Mexico. One hundred thirty-two years ago, this day, in the little church at Dolores—70 miles north of Mexico City—Father Hidalgo with his famous Grito de Dolores raised the cry of liberty which has been Mexico's undying birthright. The people responded to this cry in the most spontaneous and overwhelming mass movement which has yet been seen in any country in this hemisphere. Without arms to fight and moved only by the burning passion in their souls, the people rose at once by the tens of thousands. When Father Hidalgo fell, Father Morelos carried on. Father Morelos, who had in his veins white, Negro and Indian blood, won brilliant victories and established a constitution which abolished slavery and recognized the equality of the races. Thus Father Morelos became the first to give definite political recognition to the reality of genetic democracy.

Such was the dramatic and inspiring birth of the Mexican republic. Today this inspiring birth is being commemorated by Mexicans everywhere, and we in the United States are proud to honor it with our warmest tribute.

As we seek to understand Mexican history, and the significance of this anniversary day, it is worthwhile to note the part which religion played in the Mexican revolution. Father Hidalgo and Father Morelos went beyond the letter of the Bible into the very spirit of its transforming power, and in their own way reached out toward God, the Creator and Father of all the races.

Hidalgo and Morelos were killed, but their intense love of liberty forever will inspire the Mexican nation. The people whom they led charged against cannon with bare hands. They finally won, not because of equipment, but because of their bravery.

Many years later, in the 1860's, the spirits of Hidalgo and Morelos marched in the person of Benito Juarez, the Indian lawyer. Juarez, in his struggle against Maximilian, had more experience with fighting European invasion than anyone else in this hemisphere has had in the past 100 years.

Then, beginning in 1910, the spirits of Hidalgo, Morelos and Juarez all marched—marched with the battle cry of Emiliano Zapata, "Land and liberty!" Confusion reigned. Men died fighting passionately for their beliefs, but through all the blood and sorrow the vision of land, liberty and schools grew ever clearer.

No one should falsely conclude that the Mexican people liked bloodshed, that they enjoyed throwing their lives away recklessly. It was not that the Mexicans despised life, but rather the exceedingly high esteem they placed on liberty and land and the education which they felt to be the basis of liberty. They fought for what they knew deep down in their hearts to be the right.

And now, just as on the Fourth of July we in the United States recall the deeds of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and all of our immortal dead, so also in Mexico, on September 16, Hidalgo, Morelos, Juarez and Zapata revivify the people's minds and hearts. For them, as for us, the memory of the heroes of the past is a torch that lights the pathway of the future.

We can all be glad to see the increasing cordiality in relations between our two countries. On our own holiday, last July 4, Mexico paid tribute to us in a special celebration. It is fitting that today we likewise should express most warmly the high esteem which we have for our neighbor to the south. This terrible world war, in which we both are now engaged on the same side, is not without its compensations in the form of a new appreciation for each other. I learned this for myself in December of 1940, when, after several conferences with President Avila Camacho, I discovered the wise statesmanship which has since been demonstrated to the whole world.

The Mexican people are showing that whatever misunderstanding may have existed in the past is disappearing, and that a solid friendship based on mutual respect and understanding is taking its place. Nowhere is this friendship more strikingly demonstrated than right here in California, where several hundred thousand persons of Mexican ancestry are American citizens. Mexico and California have the same heritage, the same ancient tradition. The acquisition of California as territory of the United States was a part of the frontier history of both countries. The present offers a unique case, here in California, of what might have been a sore spot—an "Irredenta"—but which actually has become instead a fusion ground for two cultures. Hitler could never understand that.

Mexico and California have a special kinship at the present time because of the bonds of a common peril. Both have an extensive western coast line facing the enemy in the Pacific. President Avila Camacho began in December of 1940 to take steps to protect Mexico's western coast. California also was forehanded. I have been informed by Governor Olson that California worked out a complete job of civil defense earlier than any other state in the Union. This state's aircraft warning system, with 1,500 observation posts manned by 80,000 volunteer observers maintaining a 24-hour watch, helps to protect our shores against invasion by our foes.

I like to look into the future when our common bonds will be of a more tangible nature than at any time in the past, when Californians will find it possible to drive from Nogales to Guadalajara and thence to Mexico City and Acapulco. I like to think of ten times as many Californians speaking Spanish as are able to do so today. I like to think of them enjoying the Mexican music, understanding the words of the Mexican songs when they

hear them. I like to think of Californians investing money in Mexico, not on a coyote basis, as Mexicans would say, but on a fair and decent basis.

Dollar diplomacy died ten years ago. Coyote investments also will die, and so will all other forms of imperialism, direct or indirect.

Mexico is of great service in our united war effort by producing to the limit of steel, mercury, copper, tungsten, strontium, zinc, lead and all the other metals with which she is so richly endowed and which are needed, so badly by the war industries of our own country. She is sending us valuable mahogany lumber, a variety of fibers, and many vital drugs. As President Avila Camacho has stated, it may be that Mexico's role will not be fighting on foreign battlefields, but the operating of industries, farms, mines and forests. The demand of our airplane and tank factories for raw materials is insatiable.

This mutual war effort is giving our two countries an opportunity to cooperate in countless ways. Take the matter of the living standards of war workers. The governments of both countries are interested in protecting these standards, and so it is of great significance that the contracts under which the United States is getting materials in Mexico contain labor provisions which comply with the progressive labor laws of Mexico.

Or take the reciprocal arrangements on rubber, Mexico is sending us all she can of rubber produced from the shrub, guayule, which will be needed for mixing with the synthetic product. Mexico also is giving up 30 per cent of the output of her tire factories to supply deficiency areas elsewhere. We in turn are sending Mexico a certain amount of tree rubber and are helping in the development of new plantations of rubber trees.

Or take the measures being carried out jointly by our two governments to conserve and develop the resources of Mexico—such as the conservation of her petroleum and the survey of her railroad system with a view to adapting it to her industrial needs.

Or take the cooperative arrangement by which Mexican workers will come into the United States to help harvest our crops and do other war work—not on the basis of low-wage competition as in the past, but with the whole-hearted assistance and protection of the two governments. Just as dollar diplomacy has become a thing of the past, so also let us hope that the arrangements entered into by our two governments will definitely end exploitation of and discrimination against Mexican labor.

Mexico is doing a splendid job in the construction of a difficult and costly link in the Inter-American highway. As you all know, the stretch from Laredo to Mexico City is completed and doubtless many of you have had the opportunity to travel over this beautiful and scenic road. Right now Mexico is working on the uncompleted link in the southern part of the country. This, along with one or two other links on which work is now in progress, will open up a land route from the United States to Panama, and bind more closely together the nine countries of Central and North America.

These various instances of cooperation thus far attained are merely an indication of what can be worked out between the two countries in the future. I feel that, as time goes on, the number of mutually beneficial projects can and should be greatly increased. The significant fact is that Mexico is helping the United States and the United States is helping Mexico. We are next-door neighbors, and good neighbors, and we have joined hands in the great fight of the United Nations to keep the world free.

The Mexican people have a profound belief in the Four Freedoms as enunciated by President Roosevelt—freedom of speech and religion, freedom from want and fear. But if I understand their history and feelings correctly, they would add three more freedoms—first, the freedom to buy land at a reasonable price; second, the freedom to borrow money at a reasonable rate of interest; and third, the freedom to establish schools which teach the realities of life. Farmers and workers of Mexico are standing shoulder to shoulder with their brothers on our own side of the border. The Mexican people know that the Nazis have a hatred and disdain for those who do not have what the Nazis choose to call "Aryan" blood. The Mexican people know that the establishment of Nazism anywhere in this hemisphere would mean the eventual destruction of all the seven freedoms in which they so passionately believe.

A Nazi or a Jap victory would spell the death of liberty everywhere in the Western Hemisphere. And something else would die—an intangible something which has been taking shape gradually over the years, as the peoples of the New World have been groping for a special destiny all their own.

About three weeks from now, on October 12, the people of Mexico, like the other Spanish-speaking peoples of the Western Hemisphere, will celebrate what they call "the day of the race," meaning the Spanish-speaking race. We in the North call it "Columbus Day." I hope the time will come when we shall refer to it as "New World Day," and shall make it stand for liberty and true democracy throughout the hemisphere. Mexico and the United States have each in their own way made a special contribution towards bringing liberty to all the peoples of the world. We are fighting in this war for the privilege of rendering that contribution really significant and secure.

Here in the United States we speak the English language, but our people are descendants of those who represented every culture in Europe. South of our border, the prevailing language is Spanish, but the people represent not merely the Spanish and other Mediterranean cultures but the native Indian as well. In Mexico there is a justifiable pride in the great contribution to the national entity made by the Aztec, Tarascan and Mayan cultures. Thus there has come into being, here in the New World, something which is neither English nor Spanish nor Portuguese, but has an identity of its own, an identity that is uniquely American.

It is to preserve this New World identity, this New World love of liberty, this New World love of peace, this New World love of education and the dignity of the common man, that Mexico and the United States and other New World countries have joined in the



great struggle of the United Nations. We are fighting against the monsters of tyranny and savage force, wherever on the earth they must be fought.

We do not turn our backs on the Old World. We know that freedom cannot be safe in the New World unless it is secure in the entire world. We know that our devotion to New World ideals and our utter willingness to sacrifice our all in their defense give the millions in the Old World the courage to fight on.

It is because President Avila Camacho and President Roosevelt typify these New World ideals that our two nations have placed them in positions of supreme leadership.

These two great leaders will not be satisfied with anything less than a complete victory. President Roosevelt has made it clear in his September speeches that we intend to take the offensive, that we shall hit the enemy where it hurts, that we shall wake up the people of Japan and Germany to the enormity of the crimes of their leaders.

And when the victory on the battlefield is won, our New World ideals will be needed all the more, as we confront the job of building a wise and enduring peace for the entire world. That fight for the right kind of peace will not be won in a day. That fight will go on down the years. It will be fought in California and in Texas and in every one of our 48 states. It will be fought not only in the United States but in Mexico and in every one of our United Nations. It will be fought over the entire world, wherever men and women and children live and love and make their homes. It is a fight that never will be completely won, but it will always be the fight most worth the winning. This is the fight that we in the New World have pledged ourselves to make. We shall not forsake that pledge.

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